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**S.W. PERSIA**

*Letters and Diary of  
a Young Political Officer,  
1907-1914*

# S.W. PERSIA

*Letters and Diary of  
a Young Political Officer  
1907—1914*

BY

SIR ARNOLD WILSON

K.C.I.E., C.S.I., C.M.G., D.S.C., M.P.

'So teach us to number our days:  
that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom'  
Ps. 90. 12

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TO  
HUGH WILSON

MY SON! from my example learn the War  
In Camps to suffer and in Fields to dare,  
No happier chance than mine attend thy care.

\* \* \*

Then, when thy riper years shall send thee forth  
To toils of war, be mindful of my worth  
Assert thy birthright, and in Arms be known.

\* \* \*

*Thy Mother's offspring and thy Father's Son.*

VIRGIL, *Aeneid* VII. 435-40.

DRYDEN *Trans.*



## INTRODUCTION

I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him? *Ecclesiastes* iii. 22.

THIS autobiographical fragment relates to the years 1907-14 inclusive which I spent in SW. Persia, save for two short spells of leave at home and a few months with my Regiment in India. It was the centre span of a period of great diplomatic activity which reached a peak, first with the signature of the Anglo-French Agreements of 1904, again with the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian Convention in 1907, and finally in 1914 with the outbreak of war. I was a Lieutenant and not quite 23 when I first went to Persia: I entered the war as a Captain just over 30. From the time I went to Sandhurst in my 18th year, and until I married, I wrote almost daily a page or two of foolscap to my parents recording events as they occurred and the impression they left upon me, interspersed with many comments and occasional reflections upon current political issues at home and abroad, a few of which I reproduce here, as representative alike of the writer and of his times.

I also kept a diary, the greater part of which was from the outset 'official' in the sense that the greater part of it was sent every week to my superiors at Bushire and transmitted by them to the Foreign Department of the Government of India, where it was printed as part of their 'Proceedings'. I made it a rule to retain no copies of official documents which, once submitted, became the property of the Government under which I served, but, from my original diaries and from my letters home, which my mother was at pains (unknown to me) to preserve, I have been able to reconstitute a record of my doings and

## INTRODUCTION

thoughts, about one-sixth of which is here reproduced in almost precisely the same unadorned form in which it was recorded, often in camp by candlelight, from day to day.<sup>1</sup>

Here and there, for brevity's sake, I have summarized events and recorded a few contemporary comments distinguished in print by a slightly greater interval between the lines. Otherwise the book as a whole has been compiled in my spare time whilst serving as Air-Gunner officer in a squadron of Vickers-Wellington Bombers in East Anglia. I have not had ready access to my own or to public libraries and have not been able to check all dates or to verify all my quotations. If at times the narrative appears personal to the point of egotism I would remind the reader that most of it was written to my parents, whom I could not hope to see for more than a few months every five or six years, or for my own delectation and guidance, and its completion in the interval between successive North Sea Sweeps and raids over Germany, has inevitably invested it with something of the character of an *apologia pro vita sua*.

If, as I hope, it reads as an exposition of the gay text which I have placed at the head of this introduction, it is sufficient explanation that my companions for the last six months have been squadron-leaders, flying-officers, pilot-officers, sergeant-pilots, observers, wireless operators and air-gunners, flying men all, of each of whom it may be said, as a poet has said of a blackbird,

'he sees the branch trembling  
but gaily he sings  
What matter to me  
I have wings, I have wings!'

The voluminous notes from which this book has been compiled contain much historical and archaeological, geographical, geological, zoological, and botanical in-

<sup>1</sup> The letters *D* and *L* respectively followed by a date indicate an extract from my diary or from a letter to my father or mother.

## INTRODUCTION

formation, for I derived from my mother and father a keen interest in almost everything I saw and heard. Meteorological, linguistic, and ethnological data, scraps of folk-lore and tales current among the people in the midst of whom I lived crowded the pages of my notebooks. Much of it was copied at second hand from good authorities; whatever was new and of value has found its way in course of time to experts who could use my contributions, like small stones in a mosaic, to fill some gap in their knowledge. The coins I collected went to the British Museum or to the Imperial Museum at Calcutta and have been catalogued; the zoological specimens are in the Bombay Natural History Museum and recorded in its Journal; the linguistic material has been enshrined in official reports; the fossils and rock specimens have been seen by good geologists. My geographical and amateur geological notes have long ago been superseded by the patient labours of two generations of geologists and surveyors, and may well be forgotten: as Confucius says somewhere, 'men use baskets to catch fish; when they have caught the fish they forget the baskets'. The railway reconnaissances to which I have devoted so much space proved valueless, for the Persian Government, scorning to adopt an economical alignment, chose to take the Khor Musa-Burujird railway up the Diz valley—a magnificent but costly triumph of engineering skill. A motor road from Bushire to Shiraz by the direct road, made by British military engineers during the years 1917–20 and since much improved, has relegated to obscurity all schemes for railway construction from the coast.

The Turco-Persian Frontier, on the other hand, remains as demarcated in 1914, save for a few minor changes since agreed upon by the limitrophe Powers; and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company at whose prenatal creation and subsequent birth I was privileged to assist and whose rapid growth to healthy maturity I was able to

## INTRODUCTION

observe at close quarters, has gone from strength to strength.

Thus it is that, though I write this Preface in dark days and among men almost every one of whom has passed many times through the valley of the shadow of death I can still, like George Meredith, look to the good spirit of man with faith in it, and with some capacity to observe current phases of history at close quarters without being blinded by the unsteady light and bewildered by the thunder of the legions.

Before the Great War my generation served men who believed in the righteousness of the vocation to which they were called, and we shared their belief. They were the priests, and we the acolytes, of a cult—*pax Britannica*—for which we worked happily and, if need be, died gladly. Curzon, at his best, was our spokesman and Kipling, at his noblest, our inspiration. Many of us, more perhaps than to-day, had been brought up in a tradition in which Ruskin, Wordsworth and Cowper, Seeley and Freeman played their parts. We read the lives of John Nicholson, Lawrence, and Roberts, and the works of Sir William Hunter, whilst we toiled at our own ponderous Gazetteers like willing slaves making bricks for builders yet to come.

In the Persian Gulf we were never long unaware of the debt we owed to the British and Indian Navies and to our Merchant Marine, or to early surveyors like the almost legendary figures of Constable and Stiffe. We read our Bibles, many of us, lived full lives and loved and laughed much, but knew, as we did so, that though for us all, the wise and the foolish, the slave and the free, for empires and anarchies, there is one end, yet would our works live after us, and by their fruits we should be judged in days to come. If we have worked well and faithfully then it is well. It is God who gives and takes away kingdoms.—

*Potestas dei est et tibi, Domine, misericordia.*

*Saint George's Day, 1940*

ARNOLD WILSON

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## CHAPTER I

1907

### *Regimental Duty in India: A Journey across Persia: Return to India: To Persia on Duty*

**M**OST Indian Army officers, and especially those serving with one of the three Sikh Pioneer Regiments, at least two of which had been in each succeeding campaign upon and beyond every frontier of India, feel drawn from time to time to travel beyond even the vast limits of the Indian Empire. My Regiment, the 32nd Sikh Pioneers, had seen service, in the thirty years before I joined it, in Bhutan and Sikkim and Tibet, in Chitral, and on the NW. Frontier of India. It was natural, therefore, that any young officer, nurtured in such surroundings, should harbour the ambition to extend his horizon. By 1906 I had acquired a good working knowledge of and had passed the Higher Standard in Hindustani, Punjabi (the regimental dialect), Pushtu, and Persian; I had read every book I could find in the station and in our well-chosen regimental library dealing with Afghanistan and Persia and began to make plans for a journey home overland with my best friend in the Regiment, Lt. A. H. P. Cruickshank. He, too, had learned some Pushtu and Persian and was ready to travel rough and lie hard, for our means were slender.

Our first idea was to start from Quetta and make for Merv and Bokhara via Meshed, and thence home across Russia. This soon proved to be beyond our means; the Intelligence Branch, moreover, told us that passports would be refused us for such a journey by the Foreign Department, which frowned upon irresponsible travellers in those regions. So we decided to go to Bandar Abbas

## THE PERSIAN GULF

and thence home via Shiraz and Isfahan, Tehran, and Resht. The I.B. sent us their  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch maps of S. Persia, full of blank spaces marked 'high hills' or 'unexplored', lent us a plane table and some instruments, and told us that they would be grateful for any additions we could make; they also gave us copies of such reports as they had upon the regions we proposed to traverse.

In March 1907 we set off gaily from Ambala for Karachi where, as second-class passengers, we boarded the slow mail steamer up the Persian Gulf. The captain at once told us that the second class was full of Arab and Persian and Hindu merchants—we should not be at ease there, nor would they welcome us: he urged us to pay the difference and travel first class. 'We have always gone second class by P. & O.,' said Cruickshank. 'Surely the B.I. is as good!' 'It is just as good,' replied the captain sturdily, 'but if the P. & O. ran up the Gulf you would still find yourself out of place aft!' Finally the Karachi agent agreed to let us go first class without paying extra, where we met Mr. (later Sir Stanley) Reed who, years later, was a colleague of mine in the House of Commons. He was Editor of *The Times of India*, and his wide knowledge made an ineffaceable impression upon our plastic minds. Five days with him did more to enlighten us upon India, Persia, and Persian Gulf affairs than all the books we had read; I devoted many pages of my diary to what he said upon a score of topics in which I was interested.

At Bandar Abbas we kicked our heels in the Persian quarantine station for nine days, bathing for hours at a time in the sea. The drinking-water was brackish; the surroundings barren; the rooms bare of furniture. Our fellow prisoners were all Indian or Persian deck-passengers. One Persian merchant, who had his own servant, invited us to take our meals with him, refusing any payment. We ate with him, though from a separate dish:



he taught us the etiquette of the table or, rather, of the *sufra*—the cloth spread before us upon the floor at meal-times. He and other Persians spent hours teaching us Persian; it was our first experience of Persian hospitality and the best possible introduction to their country.

Released from quarantine we stayed as guests with the British Consul, Lt. C. H. Gabriel of the Indian Political Department: we met his Russian colleague, M. Owseenko, who held a watching brief for his Government and was exceedingly anxious to ascertain our identity and our plans of which, in fact, we had made no secret. The Anglo-Russian agreement for the division of Persia into spheres of interest had not yet been signed and each Power watched the other jealously. The ideal of the Government of India was an independent Persia or, if that should be impossible, a country which in the east and south should be predominantly under British influence. The Foreign Department of the Government of India staffed and paid half the cost of the Consulates at Meshed, Sistan, Bam and Kerman, Bandar Abbas, and elsewhere: its representatives were, like many of our Consular Officers in Turkey at the time, military officers, really good linguists, active travellers, and well able to exercise at least as much weight as the representatives of Russia. Many of them, such as Sykes, Lorimer, and Kennion, have left their mark upon Persian literature. I already harboured the half-formed ambition to be one of their number: Sir Louis Dane, then Foreign Secretary, had encouraged me on the single occasion on which I had met him to hope that I might one day do so, if I could win my spurs in the field before and not after I joined the Department. I had no family connexions, and very few relatives had ever served, in India: I could not hope, he said, to be nominated unless I had first done something which would give me a very strong claim. This was my chance.

## CRUICKSHANK

Cruikshank had no such ambition. He loved the Regiment as dearly as I did but, unlike me, he was already bent on marrying and 'settling down'. Either he or I would be the next Adjutant: the Colonel had made it clear that either of us would be satisfactory to him but there was not a career for both of us in the Regiment. The Adjutant would have a prior right to nomination to the Staff College: both of us could not expect to go there: we must settle between ourselves which should stay. Before we left Ambala we had reached a decision but, as close friends, we decided to make a last long journey together before the parting of the ways. He was killed while serving with our linked Regiment, the 34th Sikh Pioneers, in the second battle of Ypres on May 27th, 1915.<sup>1</sup> (Between 1914 and 1918 nearly half of all the officers and men whom I had known at Ambala fell in war, or as Sikhs say, 'were of use'.)

Such being the background of our relationship we could not have been better matched for the trip. I excelled with the plane table and he with the camera, I with a rifle and he with a shot-gun. Both of us were inured to long marches and could climb barren hills for many hours a day without fatigue; we were alike content to live on lentils and rice, dates, and unleavened bread, supplemented by whatever we could shoot; we brought no camp-beds or tables with us and only one 40-pound tent, which we pitched only when rain seemed likely, for it could not fail to catch from afar the eye of potential thieves.

We left Bandar Abbas for Lar early in March with one Persian servant, who rode a donkey and led or drove a mule to carry all our kit. At the first stage on the road we were overtaken by a mysterious Persian, mounted upon a single mule, who announced that he would keep us company. Suspecting him to be an agent of the Russian Consul and, in any case, disliking the look of

<sup>1</sup> MacMunn, *History of the Sikh Pioneers* (1936).

him, we tried politely to dissuade him. He insisted on remaining, so we waited till he slept and then untethered his beast, which bolted back to Bandar Abbas. When he awoke next morning we mildly suggested that he should do likewise, so soon as he could obtain, from a neighbouring village in a date-grove (*Gachin*), a donkey to carry his saddle-bags. He took the hint and we saw him no more. Long afterwards we heard from the British Consul that he had, in fact, been sent by the Russian Consul to spy upon us.

We passed two great stone bridges, each of forty arches, across the Shur or Salt River, some 20 miles west of Bandar Abbas (or 'Abbasi as Persians always call it), and at later stages many fine *caravansarais*, all ascribed to Shah Abbas, who has given his name to nearly all public works of utility and beauty in Persia. There are in all some twenty such *caravansarais* between Bandar Abbas and Shiraz—and probably well over a thousand in Persia dating from the reign of the great King who was contemporaneous with Queen Elizabeth. They have the spacious solidity which is the mark of the Indian Public Works Department, and a beauty which seems to be as natural to Persian architects as it was to those who built the great cathedrals and churches of England.<sup>1</sup> Apart from the very full reports that we sent to the Intelligence Branch a detailed account of our journey as far as Shiraz appeared in the *R.G.S. Journal* for February 1908.

From Bandar Abbas to Lar we found almost no drinkable water except in the great dome-covered stone cisterns, some built long before even the days of Shah

<sup>1</sup> On the walls of one such *sarai*, at Mukhah, 17 miles west of Jahrum, I saw, cut into the cement on the walls by some now unidentifiable European traveller the inscription:

DI FFICILIA UTILIA  
 . . . . MERS  
 1678

Abbas. As there had been no spring rains for two or three years at least the few wells were dry, and the cisterns were nearly empty. Passing caravans of camels and donkeys invariably camped upon the collecting ground, and the water in every cistern was consequently covered with heavy green scum and masses of camel dung and the rotting bodies of half-fledged blue rock pigeons that had fallen from nests in the roof. We had to filter it through our shirts before even our two animals would drink it. Luckily, however, we had taken a waterskin with us and, after the first two days, we filled it whenever we could, at some tank which held water slightly less offensive to eye, nose, and palate. For a fortnight we seldom had anything else to drink, but were none the worse for the experience.

In the first days of April we reached Lar, a town which no European had visited, so far as we could ascertain, since another British officer, Stack,<sup>1</sup> had passed through twenty-five years earlier. The town was more prosperous in 1907 than he had found it; the covered bazaar and splendid cistern, which he had seen in ruins, was in good repair, and trade was flourishing. The fort and walls which were in his day the outstanding features of the town were no longer to be seen. The Khan of Lar, Ali Quli Khan, received us hospitably. Like his father, as described by Stack, he was 'a tall powerfully built man, dignified and orthodox, decorous in apparel, stately in speech, courteous in demeanour; his dress half Arab'. For three days we were his guests: we went to the *hammam*, an institution known to Englishmen as a 'Turkish' bath but, in fact, Persian in origin, and were pleasantly surprised at its cleanly appearance and seemly arrangement. Our dirty clothes were washed and dried while we waited. The Khan sent his son to keep us company, and a light meal was served us in the cold

<sup>1</sup> *Six Months in Persia* (1882).

room in which clients spend an hour or more before returning to the streets. He laughed at the contrast between our tanned faces and arms and our pale bodies, tested our muscles against his, and was surprised to find that either of us could go one better than he. He told his father who, in his son's presence, thanked us for teaching his son that abstinence was the surest road to health.

Then followed a week's journey through far more attractive though still relatively desolate country, to Jahrum through Banaru, notable for a well, sunk 200 feet through solid rock, a great cistern, and a town wall of immense thickness, and Juwun, where the hospitality of the Governor Husain 'Ali Khan, rivalled that of his uncle, our host at Lar. Tall, handsome, and powerfully built, intelligent and genial, like many of the dominant class in S. Persia, he seemed to belong to a different race from the cultivators and townsfolk—the *deh-nishin*, i.e. town dwellers—whom he ruled. Then on to Shiraz, through a succession of fertile, well-watered oases of cultivation, in valleys flanked by great hog-backed masses of bare limestone, and round the salt lake of Maharlu, fed by innumerable springs, forming fresh-water pools, the haunt of a great variety of ducks and waders, to the delight of Cruickshank, who was a good ornithologist.

We tarried long here, map-making and writing notes, shooting enough to keep our cook well supplied with game, looking for nests and sometimes bathing, and talking endlessly to villagers. From lake to marsh, from marsh to reclaimed meadow, from meadow to irrigated field, the change was almost imperceptible till we were within sight of the domed mosques of Shiraz. Here we halted and sent a runner to the British Consul, Mr. George Grahame, of the Levant Consular Service, announcing our impending arrival, removed our beards, and put on our other shirts and our best suits. He sent out an escort

from his Indian Cavalry detachment, with a horse for each of us, not merely as an act of courtesy but because the town was, at the moment, a prey to violent 'constitutional' disorders, and either party would have been very ready to inflict some indignity on a pair of foreign travellers, in the hope that it would be laid to the account of the rival gang.

To be the guests of George Grahame was as good an education for us as to be on board a B.I. steamer with Stanley Reed. He was a very widely read man, steeped in Italian literature and a lover of Latin and Greek classics, a good Persian scholar, and endowed with a personality and a dignity which endeared him even to those Persians with whom his duty brought him into sharpest conflict.

At Shiraz Cruickshank and I sadly parted company, as he was urgently needed in the Regiment: he went back to India via Bushire; I went on to Isfahan and Tehran. When I returned to India he was absent from the Regiment on some course of instruction. I never saw him again, though, until his death in 1915, we wrote to each other regularly.

Shiraz itself, and the well-worn road to Isfahan, are well known and need no description here. I travelled in a springless post-cart or *fourgon*, drawn night and day by relays of four horses, sitting or dozing uneasily upon mail bags and personal baggage. The passengers included two newly elected Deputies on their way to the recently reconstituted Persian *majlis* or Parliament. By this time I could understand and speak Persian fairly well and my diary of the journey, completed at Isfahan, gives a long account of my conversations with them. Their belief in Parliament as a panacea for the defects of human nature, as exhibited in the person of Governors and Government officials, was reinforced by repeated references to English history. If it had been less success-

ful in France, this was due to inherent defects of French character; if it had failed to take root in Germany and had reduced Italy to impotence, this was, again, due to these nations and was no argument against representative government on a purely territorial basis. Nor did they admit that a multilingual country like Persia, with no other communication with the capital except post-wagons, would suffer from the concentration of authority in Tehran which was bound to follow upon a Central Parliament. In local government they took little or no interest: as in Britain, it might follow, but could not precede, a parliamentary régime. One of them was a well-educated man, even by Persian standards, which are higher than in any country in the Near and Middle East: he read French freely and spoke it a little. I enjoyed his company and learned much from him, but concluded the account in my diary of his conversation with the words:

'The *majlis* will not work: it has no roots in the soil and no tradition: either the Qajars or some other dynasty will eventually destroy it and re-establish (the old) order, but Persian nationalism will get stronger for it has roots and a tradition as old as Persia itself.'

In Isfahan I was the guest of the C.M.S. Mission, for whom then, as always, I had profound respect and admiration. Their school was good, their medical work of a very high standard; their missionary zeal was unquenched by lack of converts. In such surroundings and in such matters, I wrote,

'progress must be reckoned in terms of generations, not of calendar years. They have helped much to change the outlook of educated Persians and to give the younger generation a new and a higher standard to which to aspire. Their work is good and it will endure in some form but I doubt whether it can take root unless our liturgy and ideas can be adopted to those of Persia. Persians are great imitators, but they adapt rather than adopt, and when they fail to do so the result is

## THE BRITISH LEGATION IN TEHRAN

ludicrous, e.g. the ballet dancer's dress which Nasr-ed-Din Shah forced upon his reluctant *harem* and that of his courtiers and is now quoted against the Qajars as a proof of their folly and incapacity, though the frock-coat, which Persians have adapted to their own ideas, is seemly and popular.'

Another three days' journey by post-wagon took me to Tehran, where I stayed in the British Legation with an old Cliftonian school friend, W. A. Smart, then Vice-Consul, a most genial companion, whose youthful escapades had added rather than detracted from the respect in which Persians held him. His attitude and that of the Minister, Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, towards the Government of India and its officers in Persia was critical, almost hostile. The Minister—Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at the Court of H.I.M. the Shah of Persia, to give him his full title—was accredited to the Central Government, and had little sympathy with those who felt that to strengthen it was to strengthen the influence of Russia which then, as almost always, was by virtue of her proximity predominant in Tehran, where she could always exercise the strongest military and commercial pressure.

We in India wanted a strong and independent nation on our western border and on the shore of the Persian Gulf, but preferred a highly decentralized régime, independent of Russia, to a centralized régime under the thumb of St. Petersburg.

Sir Cecil Spring-Rice was most kind, as was everyone in the Legation, and asked me to write a report on what I had seen and heard on my journey. I gave him a report the brevity of which was dictated by the fact that my friend Smart warned me that he would have to type it.

Then by post-wagon to Resht, and across the Caspian to Baku on a Russian steamer in company as mixed as any I have ever shared. It included Turks, Armenians, Persians, Russians, a Frenchman and a German, and



some ladies of unconventional virtue whose society was pressed upon me by the hospitable Russian captain who had spent many years at sea and, he assured me, knew the English and their tastes. 'You do not drink,' he said, 'or smoke, but you will enjoy her'—pointing to the largest. 'She is returning after a long engagement with a *very* eminent Russian, and he is not, I know well, tired of her. She talks French, she eats delicately, she drinks not much, she smokes not at all. She could make you comfortable after so long a journey; "*raf*" *Khastagi*, as these Persians say, is yours for the taking.'

At Baku I found my funds nearly exhausted and took a ticket via Warsaw and Berlin in the lowest class. The carriage and its occupants were dirtier than anything I had seen in India, but I made the best of it. On the morning of the following day, while I was drinking a bowl of *bortsch* soup at a wayside station, I was accosted in French by a first-class passenger in the same train. He asked me why I went third class. I replied that I had no money. He insisted upon bringing me into his compartment and paying the difference. At Warsaw he pressed me to spend some days with him and his sons—youths of my own age. I readily consented: only then did I discover him to be a Polish business man of some wealth with a large and most delightful family of yellow-haired blue-eyed boys and girls from 24 downwards, living on a small estate some six miles outside Warsaw.

For a week I drank as good wine as I had ever tasted, and rode fine horses all day with his four sons, gay, spirited youths, one just through college as an engineer, another still under training as an Army Cadet, a third studying law. They showed me the sights and introduced me to some of the pleasures of Warsaw. The eldest wanted to come with me to London and, when I dissuaded him, compromised by suggesting a week in Berlin at his father's expense! To this I unashamedly consented.

## BACK TO INDIA

He took first-class tickets for us both, changed them for third-class tickets, and pocketed the difference, so as to have more left to spend in Berlin. We were greatly attracted by everything we saw in Germany. In Russia disorder, dirt, and lice, in Germany order and cleanliness: in Russia great schemes, in Germany great engineering works. We spent a week very happily together in Berlin: then, his pocket-money exhausted, we regretfully parted company. I reached London two days later with half a crown in my pocket.

After three months on leave in England I returned to India by P. & O. My letter home from Aden gave details of many fellow passengers,

'more interesting and less blasé, less rich but just as intelligent as those in the first-class, who dress for dinner and need a band to keep them from getting bored with each other's company.

'I sit at table with a Wesleyan Minister from N.Z. who knows your [my father's] writings well and says that no English theologian is better known "down under": your latest book is in his box and he knows T. E. Brown's poems well.

'Between us are an actor and actress on their way to join the Bandmann Company in Calcutta. The man a simple-hearted Rabelaisian, the woman, about 24, unduly apprehensive of the intentions of young male passengers such as I. I have had long talks with an English missionary going back to China and a batch of juniors in commercial houses who between them have quartered the East. I have learned a good deal from them about trade, Suez Canal dues, customs duties, freights and merchandise—a new aspect of life to me.

'The best of the lot are Australians and New Zealanders returning from the grand tour of England and, in a few cases, Europe. They are mostly old, though a few fought in S. Africa in Colonial Contingents. They have made their own way in the world, and are rightly proud of it. Nearly all the older ones were born in Britain: the younger ones are sons or grandsons of emigrants. Their accent, particularly in the

## ADEN

case of Australians, makes them on first acquaintance seem more different from us than they really are. "*Coelum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt.*" Race matters more than soil for the first five or six generations anyway.'

At Aden passengers for India were transferred from the *Mooltan* to the P. & O. liner S.S. *Peninsular*. I had time to see something of the place.

'The great rainwater tanks are the only local monument of antiquity. They are hewn out of solid rock and lined with superb lime cement. The rainfall seldom suffices to fill them and the troops are supplied from a condenser. I climbed one of the barren hills round the port (all volcanic rocks, no fossils), for a bird's eye view more desolate than anything I have seen elsewhere: not a plant or a living bird or beast. The work of Aden is done by camels and Somalis, the hinterland is occupied by Arabs of whom we know nothing, though we have held Aden for the best part of a century. This is unlike us. We have taken steps to find out all we can of the language and ways of life of all our neighbours on the frontiers of India but anyone who tries to do the same here is rebuked or removed because, I gathered at the Club from an officer I knew, the Government is anxious not to extend its responsibilities. They come to Aden, but we do not go to them and, I am bound to add, they do not want us to come, lest "incidents" should end in "punitive operations".

'Aden is a bad station: there are more graves in the cemetery than beds in the barracks. There is nothing for the men to do and not much for officers. I suppose we must keep troops here, but I should have thought Arab levies would have sufficed to hold the place till reinforcements came. And there is always the Navy. It is a good coaling station, and a convenient port of call for liners and was essential to us once the Suez Canal was built. I wish, like Palmerston, that it had never been dug, for then our position in the Mediterranean and in the Indian Ocean would be more unchallenged than it is. But it is late in the day to express such regrets.'

Returning to the ship I found we still had four hours

#### IN PRAISE OF AUSTRALIANS

to wait, so I took four Australians off to see the sights, and to visit the Club as guests of my officer friend to whom I managed to convey, from the liberal purse of one of the Australians, the price of the many drinks we took.

‘These Australians can stand an amazing lot of liquor: to see them drink is an education, though not in your eyes, I am sure.’

The *Peninsular* took five days between Aden and Bombay, and I spent some hours in the big Indian P.O. Sorting Office which prepared the Indian mails for dispatch on arrival at Bombay to every part of India.

‘The work is marvellously well done by Eurasian and Indian clerks working not at high speed, as in England, but steadily and systematically. There are special bags for high officials, and for registered letters, and for almost every Head Office in all India and Burma. If we have taught Indians nothing else—and they are apt pupils—they have learned from us the possibilities of subdivision of labour and economy of effort.

‘I made friends with two Indian passengers, both civilians, who seemed lonely and self-centred. They were not easy to talk to for they seemed very self-conscious and rather apt to take offence at quite imaginary rebuffs. And they were at pains (like the average English man and woman abroad) *not* to do in Rome as the Romans do, thus magnifying the difference in custom and convention between us. They would not drink even beer with me: they wanted tea when we were taking coffee: they came to meals earlier, or later, than the rest and hung about with doleful faces in corners when we were trying to make joyful music. A Persian and an Arab, dressed in Bond Street (the Indians were well to do but ill-dressed) were very different and made quite a number of friends between Suez and Bombay. Yet the Indians were far better educated and spoke perfect English: the Persian spoke bad French, the Arab even worse, and shouted with laughter at his own mistakes. They had their beds on deck like the other men; the Indians sweated in their cabins. I talked

#### WITH MY REGIMENT AGAIN

quite a lot of Persian with both of them. I am working several hours a day at it still, hoping it will come in useful. I wish I had begun Arabic.

‘I also spent several hours in the engine-room and stokehold with a young Engineer from Bristol who was full of enthusiasm for his profession and took me, in an old boiler suit, to every corner of his domain.’

Bombay had no attractions for me. I left it a few hours after landing: 48 hours later I was happily once more with my Regiment at Ambala: I had, indeed, applied half-heartedly for employment in the Political Department and had told the Military Intelligence Branch at A.H.Q. Simla that I should like to serve them somewhere, somehow: but I was very happy in the Regiment and it was a real home. I was at once immersed in Regimental and Company affairs, and put aside all thought, for the present, of other ways of life. I found an Indian teacher to give me lessons in Arabic and went on reading Persian: but the Regimental Workshops and Transport Mules, Machine Gun and Signallers, demanded most of my time.

We had just been furnished with new accoutrements with which to carry the Pioneers spade or pick, hoe or axe, or bill-hook or saw, in addition to a rifle and 100 rounds.

‘The men complained that it galled them. I offered to march 34 miles or so from Ambala up the Kalka road, fully accoutred, with a rifle and 200 rounds, in a single night, in order myself to test the new equipment. Colonel Brander agreed. I showed myself at the Quarter Guard at 8.30 one evening and started off. By 6.30 next morning I reached the regimental camp and was at once told by the C.O. to strip to the waist and show my back to the Indian officers and my own Company N.C.O.’s and a few older men. It was slightly galled at one point. Then I took off my boots and showed my feet: they were not sore though greatly discoloured, for I had

## RECRUITS SWORN IN

accustomed myself to do without socks. The example had some effect on the rank and file who thenceforward decided to make the best of the new equipment.'

One of my last letters from Ambala described the formal ceremony of admitting recruits to the Regiment after they have been trained. It took place two or three times a year, on parade on the great *maidan* in front of the barracks, flanked by *shisham* and *pipal* trees.

'The Regiment in full scarlet formed three sides of a hollow square: in the centre sat the white-bearded priest: the holy book of the Sikhs (the *granth sahib*) before him on a costly reading desk covered with gold-thread embroidery. On either side were Sikh officers with drawn swords. Behind it a small guard of honour with fixed bayonets. The Adjutant called the parade to attention. The Colonel ordered the recruits to be summoned. They were ready at the Guard Room 200 yards away and marched up in perfect order, clad in white turbans and white shirts—"candidates" in fact—some thirty strong. To them, three at a time, the priest (*granthi*) recited the oath in Punjabi in a clear voice that all could hear, and made them repeat it, their right hand upon the book itself: "I swear-by-the Almighty, on this sacred book, that I will truly serve the King-Emperor (he hesitated—so long had he said Queen-Empress) with life and limb in heat and cold—*khuskhi ya tari se*—by sea and by land—with obedient heart and loyal tongue"—a long recital. After each three men had taken the oath they stepped a pace back. The *granthi* raised his hand and uttered the Sikh war-cry and salutation: "*Wah guru ji ki khalsa wah guru ji ki fatch*." Back from the ranks came the same answering cry, charged with deep emotion.

'Then three more—and another three—till all had taken the oath and stood before him. Then he spoke to them, as a Bishop to boys just confirmed—just a few sentences. The Sikh officer in charge of them came up to the Colonel, seated on his charger, to report that all had taken the oath: he, too, grey-haired and bemedalled—and each medal means much to soldiers who once shared the same discomforts and risks—

## UNDER ORDERS FOR PERSIA

exhorted them briefly to be worthy of the calling to which they had dedicated themselves.

'Then they were marched off, to return again ten minutes later headed by the regimental band in the full glory of scarlet and blue and were halted behind us. The order was given "Open ranks to receive recruits": those soldiers who were to have a recruit next to them put out their left hand and the ranks were opened till a space was left. Then came the order "Recruits will take their places". Into each gap proudly stepped a recruit: next his father or uncle, but oftener next a brother or a cousin or a man of the same village and sub-caste. Then we formed line, and finally marched past the Colonel, attended by the Senior Sikh officers and the Adjutant. Such a ceremony meant a very great deal to me and yet more to these young men. To leave a Regiment of one's free will with such memories in mind is like leaving a religious Order. Our oath was not to kill but to suffer death if need be, not so much to make war as to keep the Queen's peace.

'What Liberal or Socialist writer on India has ever seen this? And had he seen it and understood it, could he ever write about soldiers and officers, as most of them do, with veiled contempt?'

For the rest, my letters tell of night manœuvres and trench-digging at Chandigarh, of peacock-shooting and some pig-sticking in the foot-hills, and of long hours spent, when I got the chance, on Persian and Arabic. I was happy with the N.C.O.s and men, on good terms with the Indian officers, and in harmony with my brother officers.

During the last week of November I received orders to go in command of twenty men of the 18th Bengal Lancers to Mohammerah, via Karachi, and thence by land to the site, afterwards to become a famous oilfield, on which half a score of Canadian drillers and as many British engineers under G. B. Reynolds were drilling for oil for the D'Arcy Exploration Company at two

## TO THE PERSIAN GULF

points in the foot-hills of SW. Persia 20 miles east of Shushtar. The Persian Government had granted the concession six years before, in 1901, and the heads of the Bakhtiari tribesmen had agreed to give facilities; ample payments in cash had been made and a share of profits promised. But the local inhabitants and the tribesmen themselves were suspicious and difficult to deal with. Consular Guards were at that time provided by the Government of India for most Consulates in NW. and S. Persia, following in this respect the precedent set by Russia—and with better reason, for in the disturbances which followed the inception of a constitutional régime British Consulates were often attacked, and Consuls and British subjects travelling on the main roads cruelly assaulted and robbed. The detachment which I brought out was ostensibly intended to reinforce the guard of the Ahwaz Consulate, though in practice it was to protect the drillers until the attempt to find oil was successful or was abandoned.

Of all this I knew little or nothing when I got my orders. The telegram reached me in camp on November 29th. I left the same day, full of regrets which I believe were mutual, for Ambala, a 25-mile drive by mule tonga. On the afternoon of November 30th I left Ambala for Karachi.

‘Two hours sleep: 22 hours transferring one set of responsibilities and assuming a new set, and packing my modest belongings, including all my books. Then two days of luxurious rest in the train, wondering idly whether I have done the right thing in thus seizing the reins of the White Horse of Opportunity as it came dashing past me. To turn one’s back on India and the Indian Army is a step not to be taken lightly, but I am sure Colonel Brander was right when he said to me: “Never ask for a particular job, and never refuse one if offered unless it is a soft one.”

‘I enjoyed the journey to Karachi by Bhatinda and Samo-



#### TO THE PERSIAN GULF

sata and Sukkur, mostly desert, with occasional oases of green crops, palms and tropical plants in brilliant contrast to the quieter shades of the desert. Not that deserts do not attract me. They are full of life. Tiny flowers in spring: lizards and insects, birds and even beasts like zebras and foxes that are not to be seen elsewhere. And deserts are so clean and free of biting flies and other plagues and so cool at night that sleep will come to a man in the desert when it would be denied him in the prosperous cultivated area a few miles away.'

## CHAPTER II

1908

### *On the future Oilfield: Surveys in Bakhtiari and Kuhgalu hills and in Arabistan*

THE journey up the Persian Gulf by fast mail in S.S. *Kola* took five days: a fellow passenger was Mr. (later Lord) Lloyd, later famous as Governor of Bombay and High Commissioner in Egypt. He was on his way to examine British trade prospects in Mesopotamia. He was about my age and left an indelible impression of energy and firmness on my mind. Another was a Persian, educated in England, who sold English piece goods and bought Persian carpets.

'He is the sort of man we badly need everywhere. He has three or four languages to his credit and the financial incentive to spur him; he can push trade to the mutual advantage of both countries and he is at home in both countries. We also have on board a great French archaeologist, Jacques de Morgan, head of the French Scientific Museum at Susa—Shushan the Palace of the Book of Esther. So we all have different but overlapping interests, complementary, not divergent, and we make a good quartet at table though I am much the youngest. The Persian Gulf has its glories, black headlands towering from deep blue water, blue skies and, at night, phosphorescence stronger than I have seen elsewhere. Muscat is the sort of place Albrecht Dürer would have loved.'

I landed at Mohammerah and was the guest for a few days of the Consul, Mr. William McDouall, a gentle-voiced man of good family<sup>1</sup> who had married a Persian

<sup>1</sup> He was the son of W. S. McDouall, Rector of Owsden, Suffolk, and descended on both sides from old Galloway families, McDouall of Freugh and Dalrymple Hay of Dunraght Park, Wigtonshire. He was at school at Uppingham under Thring and went to the Persian Gulf on appointment to the Indo-European Telegraph Department. He was appointed the first

## MOHAMMERAH

woman whilst a junior clerk. He had three or four children, none of whom were worthy of him. His wife and the younger children lived 'behind the screen' as the Persian custom was in another part of the house. He knew a great deal of local history and was a bit of a scholar in Arabic and Persian, not a Moslem, but held in great respect locally. He was one of three Europeans then regularly resident in the little town at the mouth of the Karun, the others being a Belgian Director of Customs and a European Assistant Surgeon on Quarantine duty. We began a friendship which lasted till his death at Kermanshah soon after the War of 1914-18.

He took me to call on Hajī Rais ut Tujjar, the chief merchant and agent of the Shaikh of Mohammerah, a very striking personality. We drank tea in his public reception room, the walls of which were covered with a wonderful collection of photographs of Persian and Arab notables, singly and in groups. He arranged to put our horses and kit upon one of his steamers leaving a few days later for Ahwaz.

'The view from the Consulate', I wrote, 'down the Shatt-al-Arab, the combined streams of the Tigris and Euphrates and up the Karun, is something to treasure in the mind. Deep date-palm groves on either side: the turbid reddish stream of the Karun mingles with the clearer waters of the main river just below the Consulate.

'The place is full of historical associations and of archaeological problems. The Karun once had its own mouth to the sea: the new channel is very broad but not over three or four hundred years old. In 1856 we bombarded the place and sent ships to Ahwaz: there are men still living who have vivid memories of the event and cannon-balls are sometimes

Vice-Consul at Mohammerah in 1889. He retired from the Consular Service in 1917 and became Assistant Political officer at Badrai in Iraq. In 1921 he retired to Khanaqin, where at the date of his death he was adviser on local affairs to the A.P.O.C. He was for nearly forty years a member of the Royal Asiatic Society. He died on Nov. 2nd, 1924, aged 69. (*Journal R.A.S.*, Jan. 1925.)

## AHWAZ

picked up in the ditches. It is, to me, a new and fascinating world. I wish I knew more Arabic and Persian. Sindbad the Sailor started his journeys close by: so did Abraham—from Ur of the Chaldees. King Darius and Ahasuerus sat at Susa only 100 miles north. It is the oldest historical centre on the face of the earth. I am lucky in another way: I know how to survey and there is a vast area here wholly unsurveyed.'

A few days later I left for Ahwaz with my twenty cavalymen, doing the last 30 miles by land over the desert. I was hereafter 'Consular Assistant' to the Vice-Consul at Ahwaz, Capt. D. L. R. Lorimer of the Indian Political Department. It proved to be a delightful and inspiring partnership. He loved languages and books and maps, and was interested in the people and everything round him. He lived frugally, but kept good horses and good books, and his one-eyed Persian clerk was a character worthy of Haḡi Baba. He spared no pains to acquaint me with his own job as well as my own, and we pooled our little libraries.

'We spend long evenings talking and discussing things: I have met no one whose tastes more nearly coincide with mine. He has been here four years and is more alive to and in touch with the outside world than most people in the centre of it, for he gets *The Times* daily edition and reads one issue on six days a week and remembers it. We also get Reuter's telegrams at intervals.

'Ahwaz is a collection of mean huts: Nasiri the new town below the *sinn* or rapids is better built, mainly of stone dug from the ruins of what was once a great city dating from the days when one of several canals, drawing water from the Karun, irrigated vast areas on either side where now only sheep graze.

'I hope to receive sermons and theological literature from you here. I am 1,000 miles distant from anything of the sort, and I miss it, though I read my Bible and the Prayer Book regularly.

'I have insured my life in your favour for a little more than

## MAMATAIN

I have cost you and so am for the first time really self-supporting.'

On New Year's Day 1908 we set out by way of Raghaiwa for Mamatain, one of the two places where Canadians were drilling for oil. It lay some miles north of Ram Hormuz, in a narrow valley with almost vertical cliffs of gypsum overlaid by gravel, pierced here and there by old tunnels which centuries ago,<sup>1</sup> when the river levels were higher, must have carried water to the plains. The place smelt strongly of  $H_2S$ : the water was impregnated with sulphur: experts had entertained high

<sup>1</sup> Near Ram Hormuz, a few miles south of Mamatain, are mounds and ruins known as Qal'eh-i-Khatun--'the lady's fort'. The following note (from the A.P.O.C. house journal *Naft*, by Mr. V. H. Boileau) shows how ancient is Persian civilization and how enduring are historical traditions:

'Some five years ago, the writer was surveying a low range of hills in Khuzistan, Iran, when he discovered the remains of a small fort. Nearby gullies had been dammed to give a water supply, and there were quantities of potsherds on the slopes (unfortunately of no very distinctive types, but quite conceivably belonging to the simpler domestic pottery of the Early Persian period). Enquiries in neighbouring villages not only gave the local name of the fort as Qal'eh-i-Khatun ("Queen's Castle") but also supplied the following legend:

"Long ago, when the capital was at Shush, the King had a beautiful but extravagant favourite. He had grown tired of her persistent demands for money, so she waited till his birthday feast when, according to custom, he must grant any request. When he and his nobles were at dinner, she sent her small son into the banqueting hall to ask for another large sum. The King, though very much annoyed, could not refuse, but his courtiers reminded him that he might impose conditions.

"Accordingly he replied that the boy's mother might have the money, but that she must collect it herself out of tolls on the caravan roads. At the same time he arranged that she should be closely guarded and prevented from leaving the palace.

"After some time she succeeded in bribing certain of the guards, and escaped with them and her small son. They settled on the Dirb-i-Khatum road (which now runs from Ahwaz to Ram Hormuz, but originally continued to Tashak, a few miles north of Ram Hormuz, where there is an ancient site) and here built Qal'eh-i-Khatun, in which they spent the rest of their lives taking the tolls from passing caravans."

'Such evidence as we have for the age of the ruin shows that it is quite conceivable that the King was Xerxes, and the woman his deposed favourite Vashti. The occasion of the birthday feast and the mention of the obsolete custom that no request might be refused are distinctly suggestive. If this be granted, the legend forms an interesting supplement to the Book of Esther.'

hopes of oil which were never fulfilled. In the far distance loomed great limestone hills: there was no lack of wild life—black legged partridges and a smaller *sisi*, quail and pigeon, for the pot, jackals and foxes, porcupine, and now and then a wolf or leopard or cinnamon bear. But the people themselves were my main interest.

‘The weather here has been bad; wet clothes do not trouble me and I can manage with wet blankets by doing without them and sitting over a camp fire till I dry, but the storm has been so violent that it put out the fire. But “heaviness may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning” in the form of letters from Worcester. Also, less pleasant to read, a telegram announcing that the officer sent to assist me, Lt. J. G. L. Ranking, is my senior by a few months and will take over command. This is a real blow: he will doubtless become Vice-Consul when Lorimer goes on leave. There is no work for two of us. I must find some sphere of activity in which I neither overlap nor collide. Perhaps work for the Intelligence Branch as a surveyor, perhaps a Vice-Consulate somewhere else—there is no scope here for us both, so the junior must seek his fortune. The idea was to put one of us here and one of us at the other place where boring is in progress—Masjid-i-Sulaiman; but the Company are abandoning Mamatain and are not, at present, likely to start elsewhere. Lorimer has a great name here. The Foreign Office and Simla deserve credit for sending a detachment of troops as a foretaste of what will follow if the local tribes try to stop work by a British Company working under a proper concession which, if successfully exploited, will benefit Persia and local tribesmen beyond imagination.

‘I am delighted at your news of Hugh and Steuart [my brothers] who are making, or have already made their mark in different lines of country to mine, as Mona and Edward and Grace [my half brother and sisters] have done long ago and as Margaret [my sister] doubtless will. It is pleasant to be one of a big family with such different occupations and ideas, but all anxious, as Grace wrote to me, “to see what is on the other side of the mountain”.’

## TRAVEL AND MAP-MAKING

For the next few months of 1908 I travelled in widening circles, making surveys and collecting information. My pay left little to spare for luxuries and I lived wholly on what the country produced—barley bread, dates, lentils, and rice, with goat or, rarely, mutton once a week, depending for meat for the most part on what I could shoot. I wrote articles from time to time for the Indian daily papers and for military periodicals and also, less frequently, for English journals, of none of which I have copies. I do not even remember the subjects, but my father and mother thought well of them. I came to know the Mamatain-Masjid-i-Sulaiman route via Masambuli, Shikarab, Lahwari, and Makwand past Gurgir under the great Asmari Mountain and through the Tembi gorge so well that I could follow it on a dark night without a guide: so also the road to Shushtar via Batwand and to Ahwaz. My tent having several times been pierced by bullets and twice entered by thieves at night, I ceased to use a camp-bed and slept always on the ground; whence it was easy to rise, and easier to hear any suspicious sound.

I started writing an official gazetteer of SW. Persia—one of seven such volumes which were later printed under my name.

‘I cannot imagine that they will ever be of use but, as T. E. Brown wrote (*Opifex*)

This is thy life, indulge its natural flow,  
And carve these forms. They yet may find a place  
On shelves for them reserved in any case,  
I bid thee carve them, knowing what I know.

‘The Indian I.B. has been made responsible by the Committee of Imperial Defence for this part of the world but not for Mesopotamia and Arabia which come under the W.O. With small funds at its disposal it must do its best. Major [later Sir] H. H. Austin, R.E., who was at Clifton in your day, has sent me a draft of the  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch sheets for this part of Persia

## EXPLORATION

—mere outlines with next to no detail. Great areas are shown as “unexplored”: it is an immense incentive.

‘I have extended my triangulation outwards from the fields with vast labour, for I have to climb four or five thousand feet every day. I am just reaching the Karun gorges north of Masjid-i-Sulaiman.’

A few days later I wrote again:

‘I have spent a week in the gorges, camping at Bardiqamchi where the Karun runs in a defile with perpendicular cliffs rising 1,000 feet or more on each side. The word means “whip-boulder”. There was till twenty years ago a great mass of rock in midstream here, which set up a great whirlpool in spring, drowning cattle and men and women every year. The tribal chiefs (Ilkhani and Ilbegi) blasted it away and it is now a fairly safe place for a ferry. I watched a goat-skin raft (24 skins) made and used to carry women and children across the river which was in full spate (April 15). Mules and horses were swum across, held by head ropes by men on the raft while others paddled. Cattle, sheep and goats, newly shorn, got across as best they could. A few men swam across unaided. I went with them to show that an Englishman was as good as they in the water: it was very cold for the snows have just begun to melt.’

Some months later I went on a skin raft from Susan above Bardiqamchi through the gorge to Gotwand on the Akili plain north of Shushtar.

‘(*L.*, July 22) It was an exciting expedition which, so far as I know, no Persian has tried before. We might have been overturned and had to swim for it among the rocks. In case this should happen I had provided swimming bladders for the two men and myself. It took us twelve hours: the passage through the gorge was tremendous: we could see great fish swimming in clear pools caused by great springs issuing from the limestone. Three times we passed the remains of great bridges—probably dating from Sassanian times. When we reached our journey’s end we bought and killed a goat and had a square meal. I live so simply that I enjoy a full



### G. B. REYNOLDS

stomach of meat and rice as much as any of my men and think about it and look forward to it as a landmark in life.'

I saw much at this time of two men employed by Mr. W. K. D'Arcy at Masjid-i-Sulaiman—G. B. Reynolds, the Chief Engineer, and Dr. M. Y. Young, the Company's Medical Officer, both men of mark. Reynolds was a man of 50, very active in body and mind, accustomed to long journeys on mule or horseback, a competent geologist, a good civil engineer. A successful autocrat in his dealings with men, he had repeatedly defied threats of violence and parried many shrewd blows against the enterprise in his charge. Sometimes the local priesthood were invoked, sometimes local merchants: if he required wood a local chief would plead that trees were so scarce that he could not allow them to be cut: if he wanted labour, he would find that every able-bodied man was busy—until he had agreed to an exorbitant wage. He kept his temper and the confidence of his staff but not always that of his directors at home, who were most reluctant to come upon the scene in person. Competent, intolerant of opposition but patient in negotiation, he was the ideal man for such a post; his previous experience in the Indian P.W.D. stood him in good stead, for he knew all the local languages, and in addition could get the best out of the Indian staff he employed. He was dignified in negotiation, quick in action, and completely single-minded in his determination to find oil. His correspondence with his principals, and even with consular authorities, was marred by a strain of facetious acerbity unworthy of him. It obtruded itself into his conversation from time to time, but it was a veneer: beneath which was solid British oak, and I noted in my letters home, which served as a diary, that Captain Lorimer had not taken long to penetrate beneath the surface of Reynolds's mind.

Dr. Young was a very different type of man, and not less valuable to the Company or, indeed, to his country.

DR. M. Y. YOUNG

He arrived in Persia a few months only before me as Medical Attendant to the Company's European and Persian staff. Within a few years he was the trusted medical adviser of the principal tribal leaders and Persian gentlemen. He overcame the distrust of the tribesmen and their women and their just fears of surgical operations performed by other than European doctors, of whom they had little or no experience. He became exceedingly competent in the Persian language and sufficiently familiar with local dialects. He was not less trusted by the British than by the Persian staff. He was of the greatest service to the Consulate as well as to the Company, whose hospitals and medical services, both preventive and curative, set a higher standard than was at the time to be found anywhere east of Suez. To him more than to any other single man the Company and the British and Persian Governments owed the complete absence of trouble on the oilfields in the autumn of 1914 when communication with the coast was cut off by bands of insurgent Arabs under Turkish leadership. It was of such a man that Homer wrote

A good physician, skilled our wounds to heal,  
Is more than armies to the public weal.

'My relations with the Company's European staff are very good. I live in a small camp apart from them but see them daily and have a meal with them once a fortnight or so. They are glad to have the guard and not less so to know that I am map making much farther afield, for I can thus make contact with small tribal chiefs from whom we want to draw labour, pack animals and even supplies of straw, barley, wood for fuel and other local supplies. Reynolds is an old campaigner of very wide experience in Persia and India (P.W.D.). Dr. Young is something of a genius at his work. What beats me is how a man like D'Arcy and his financial partners of the Burma Oil Company can be content to sit at home and write letters—not always wise or well informed—instead of coming out here to this glorious climate to see things for themselves.'

## PERSIAN HABITS

Not until 1911, after the formation of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, did anyone from the London office visit Persia.

I see from my letters that I obtained from England a finely bound copy of the Regimental History which I had helped to translate into Punjabi, printed in the Gurmukhi script, for retention by the Sikh priest (*Granthi*) with the Regimental copy of the Sikh holy book (*Granth Sahib*)—which in effect is a combination of the history of the Sikhs with the lives of their religious and secular leaders.

I grew a beard, partly to save trouble when travelling, partly because most Persian tribesmen grew beards. When travelling in tribal territory I often dressed as a Persian—European clothes in such surroundings would have been as inappropriate as Persian clothes in England—and I adopted Persian habits of eating and drinking. It made life much easier and cheaper: European ways attracted or rather distracted attention of men with whom I wished to be upon easy terms.

The management of the Consular escort took only half an hour or so a day or a few hours a week. The rest of the time I spent either working at reading and writing Persian, or talking the local dialect, or in surveying and compiling detailed reports for military purposes. The Bakhtiari tribesmen excited intense interest in me and my letters home were full of them and their ways.

‘I envy them their hardy ways, which I try to copy; an open goat-hair tent their only shelter: a cotton shirt, loose cotton trousers and a loose felt coat without sleeves their only covering in the coldest weather, even at night—and it often freezes even here. Their shoes of cotton, the tops woven by themselves—a great art—the thin soles made of folds of old cotton cloth tightly packed and threaded from end to end with strips of raw hide. Their cooking pots of copper kept very clean with sand: their tableware of wood or copper,

## VOTES FOR WOMEN

tinned over, or more rarely of nickel. They are happy—as I now am—on one good meal at night and a fairly good meal of dates and bread at midday. Their staple diet is very thin flakes of barley bread or rather thicker cakes of bread made from acorn flour, ground on a flat stone with a well-rounded smooth boulder, and soaked for some days in running water. Fresh milk is seldom drunk but buttermilk is a universal drink, as also curds (the *yoghourt* of Turkey and Bond Street) and butter, sometimes fresh with bread, more often clarified and used with rice. Rice is much in demand: the best sort is “red” rice only roughly husked by pounding in a wooden mortar. Lentils are a luxury as also meat, which is either boiled when the animal is old and tough, or grilled over a wood fire. I live on this fare and nothing else for I cannot afford to carry about tinned provisions like the Company’s officials, and would not, even if I could. I have never been fitter than I am now, and I can climb all day with nothing but a few ounces of dates and a couple of flaps of bread, washed down with buttermilk from some hospitable nomad or water from the stream, lapped from my right hand as is the custom. As in David’s day only townsmen put their noses into the water.’

My letters to my mother included a running commentary on aspects of domestic political subjects in which she was interested, of which the following (March 1908) is a fair example:

‘I have not studied the question of Votes for Women but I have read the arguments against it and they do not impress me: women voters may introduce a steadying element, but the parliamentary vote as an institution is, to my mind, one of the disappointments of the last century. There is little to show that the right to vote is exercised with knowledge or discrimination: voters are moved by prejudice, fed on lies, and quick to change their minds. We are as a nation no less fickle than the French but our parliamentary system mercifully hides the fact. The British people are good through and through: the great mass want to be led in great matters, and to be left alone in small. Parliament has no influence in the

## INTELLIGENCE REPORTS

former and shows little capacity in the latter. The saving grace of the British system of government is that the executive is strong. As a servant of His Majesty I have no politics, I get my orders from Mr. Secretary Morley or Secretary Sir Edward Grey and I care not and scarcely trouble to remember what party they belong to. When the mantle of authority is on their shoulders and the Sword of State in their hands I doubt whether they themselves care very much, but perhaps I am being cynical.'

In April the nomads begin to leave the lowlands of SW. Persia for the highlands, in search of grass, and by the end of May I found it too hot to survey and difficult to employ myself. I had covered all ground within reach, from Dizful to Ram Hormuz and from the Karun to Ahwaz. The shade temperature in my tent was 110° F. from 9 a.m. till 4 or 5 p.m. Following local custom I had deep caves dug in the hill-side and managed to get through a great deal of reading there, for I was gradually collecting a library of books dealing with this part of the world in particular, and with Persia in general, whilst my mother kept me well supplied with books on general topics. At the same time I busied myself in completing the manuscript of my first big Intelligence Report.

'It will be printed by the Foreign Department or the I.B. as a Secret or Confidential Report, with my name on the cover, so "*non omnis moriar*" I shall earn a little bit of immortality. As you know, official Reports and Statistics have been my delight since Clifton days and I am proud to have had, so soon, a chance of producing a volume of my own. But I do not want to become a Persian expert in a back-water, as I fear this is. My ambitions lie in India, not here, though I love the life: my only fear is lest my present activities may tie me for ten years or so to this line of life. Apart from anything else Persia is no place for a married man even if he is content to remain childless which is far from my ideas. I am at present like Horace in his youth, *puellis idoneus*—not

## CANADIAN DRILLERS

immune to feminine charms—though I cannot yet say with him *et militavi non sine gloria*—I have earned distinction in war. I shall have no chance of one or the other climax if I stay here too long.'

During the long summer days I saw a good deal of the Canadian drillers at Masjid-i-Sulaiman and spent hours with them on the rig, helping them sometimes, in the oil and grease which surrounded them, and listening to their 'shop', which was as specialized as that of any tribesman.

'The half dozen Canadian drillers on the rigs near my tent live in small domed stone built houses 400 yards away with their own servants and kitchen. They are good, independent, rough men, unceremonious and curiously self-conscious. They would not call me "Mr." though I so addressed them for the first two or three months. Then, one day, when they had decided for themselves my place in the universe, they began to call me "Sir". They are a good-hearted lot, but only the head driller McNaughton has much technical as opposed to practical knowledge. They are full of prejudices about food and drink, eschewing fresh food in favour of "canned" provisions. They live uncomfortably, eat their meals anyhow, finding no satisfaction in the conventional carefully laid table and orderly presentation of food which every Persian prides himself on. Small grievances bulk largely in their talk. They are very well paid (I get far less than any European in the camp) but resent having to pay for anything extra except beer and whisky which they consume with results for which they blame the climate!

We get on well together and I often dine with them. Last week I gave them a dinner, borrowing their tables and cutlery. The soup was made from the bones of an old cow my cavalymen had killed and eaten. This was followed by chicken stuffed with raisins (small green and large brown), pistachio nuts and almonds, boiled first and then grilled with a sauce made of walnuts and green chillies, garnished with rice and egg-plant. Then came dried figs, apricots, cherries and plums, stewed or as dessert, three kinds of melon, cucumber,

## THE BEAUTIES OF PERSIA

lettuce, a kind of cream cheese made in my kitchen from milk. The freshly ground coffee was pure Mocha; otherwise everything was Persian grown. The sweetmeats were Persian and I gave them strong rum made by taking a big water melon, extracting the seeds in the middle and filling it with brown sugar. After a month or so hanging in the kitchen the melon holds a pint or so of good pure strong liquor.

'My guests took their fill of every course and began to complain of their own poor food. "Only fellows like you can afford to live so well" said one. I replied that *their* cook had prepared the dinner, that all they had eaten and drunk was bought in the nearest bazar and was just the "dirty native food" they despised.

'I hope and believe that this will wean them to some extent from the mule loads of tinned provisions they at present consume every month.'

I was much alive to the beauties of the country: the following extracts from two letters, the first written in March, the second in August 1908, give a fair idea of the contrast of the seasons.

'I write from camp on a hill-side facing north looking across the Karun, 1,000 feet below me and only about half a mile distant, so steep are the slopes. Everything round me is green except where patches of white reveal the underlying gypsum. To the south and east rise hills of sandstone, of as many shades of red as the sandstones of the Devon coast, steeply inclined and so rocky that no grass grows on them. Just across the Karun a scarp of conglomerate, 1,500 feet high and almost vertical, dominates the gorge: beyond it a tangle of gypsum hills, with more sandstone overlying them here and there. In the distance the great limestone masses of the Zagros, each a succession of roughly parallel ranges increasing in height to the north, running NNW. or SSE. The snow-clad peaks are 100 miles distant but perfectly clear—it is the sort of view one may see in Switzerland and on as big a scale.

'The sweetest of music to anyone whose ancestors kept sheep [our branch of the Wilson family originated in the

## SPRING IN PERSIA

Wastwater and the Duddon Valleys of Cumberland] wakes me before dawn. It is the kids and lambs calling and the dams answering. Each tent has its own flock, each flock its shepherd and one or two boys, to each of whom every sheep and goat is familiar so that if the flocks are mingled they can be separated with certainty. Each flock too is milked by the wives and daughters of the owner and shepherd.

'The dawn comes slowly and the clear-cut outlines of bare hills of literally every colour are revealed against an upper background of grey changing in succession to delicate shades of blue, green, and finally pink. Then the golden disk of the sun comes over the shoulder of the hill and the camp begins to stir as the hoar frost vanishes from the surface of my little tent and meagre pile of baggage. The hills and plains are carpeted with flowers: in the valleys here and there are great beds of wild narcissus: my men, like Persians, bend low to their stirrups to smell them as they ride slowly through, sometimes putting up a wild pig or two. I can remember no time when my mind, and eyes and ears enjoyed during all my waking hours such a feast of beautiful and interesting things. As Henry Newbolt writes, "Oh mother earth, by the great sun above thee, I love thee, O I love thee".'

Five months later I wrote from a camp not far from the same spot:

'I rode here by moonlight, starting at about 2 o'clock, bringing a few of my cavalry sowars with me to bathe in the Karun and to get away from the heavy smells and monotony of the oilfield where it is 120° or more from 10 a.m. till 5 p.m. every day. We reached our destination an hour after sunrise (I have long ceased to use a watch), killed and ate a kid we had brought with us, grilling it on a wood fire, baked some bread and made some tea, sharing the meal with three tribesmen who were tending buffaloes in the reeds close by. In return they brought us, in a goatskin, as much fresh milk and buttermilk as we could drink during the day—about half a gallon each. An hour later we bathed. Then we slept or dozed until the sun began to sink a little. Then we bathed again, got a big *mahseer*, a kind of carp, by a lucky rifle shot,



## SUMMER IN SOUTH-WEST PERSIA

a brace of pigeon, and a few red-legged partridge. While the men were preparing the meal I climbed the hill on the far side of the river hoping for a mountain sheep or ibex. I saw nothing of the sort but was rewarded by a fresh view in the haze of the foothills between the Karun and the Zagros. The air in the valley blew hot in my face as if there was a great grass fire close by. Noisy grasshoppers and a few locusts swarmed everywhere—no birds to eat them—the few birds I saw sat fanning themselves in the shade and panting with open wings. Everything was brown; the only touch of green was the reed-beds in the gorge, occasional bushes of wild almond and *kunar* (jujube) trees on the steep slopes, furrowed by goat and sheep tracks; the only other touch of colour the pink oleander, which is poison to horses and mules.

‘The river, which was red with silt in March and April, is now greyish-white from dissolved gypsum and limestone I suppose. It certainly tastes a little of Epsom salts and acts accordingly upon strangers. But we, who have drunk it for eight or nine months, are quite immune, though we prefer spring water when we can get it—and the men found a good little spring which we shall use next time we come here.

‘We slept 500 feet up, out of reach of mosquitoes, on a brow which caught the breeze coming down the valley and which afforded some grazing for our beasts. I went half a mile farther up the track to lie down and enjoy the absolute silence and the stars, telling the men to saddle up an hour after the moon rose.

‘At dusk, as usual, they had their communal prayers, the Havildar (Sergeant) leading them. First the formal ablutions, then, facing Mecca, the call to prayer, the creed or profession of faith, the prayer for protection against evil, the prayer for peace and the supremacy of the Caliph of Islam and, in the Army, the prayer for the King Emperor. All in Arabic: all simple, sincere and devout. They were especially solemn this evening, a little awed by the grandeur of the setting.’

Describing my regimen of life to my mother in May 1908 I wrote:

‘My pay is small and I cannot afford tinned stuff, except

## FOOD IN SUMMER

an occasional soup square when I am in a hurry. My food costs me 10*d.* a day of which I fancy 5*d.* is profit, but I am a stranger in a strange land and cannot expect to live as cheaply as the inhabitants. I eat twice a day, a small meal at 7 a.m. or so: a big meal soon after sundown. Milk, curds, cheese, lentils, rice, maize corn-cobs, barley bread (*very good*) and dates are staples. Eggs and an occasional chicken, goat or sheep once a week, are luxuries. Dried figs, cherries, apricots and melons of three kinds in season are also staple food, and very cheap. I drink any water that the local people drink—unboiled. I am at pains however to keep some specially good water, when we come across any, for coffee and tea. At Masjid-i-Sulaiman and indeed at most places here there is enough Epsom salt in the water to cause discomfort to new-comers. It curdles milk; so we drink tea without milk, as Persians do. I sometimes crave for the fleshpots of India, but I keep very fit on this diet. Mosquitoes and sand-flies are no worse than in India, but there were countervailing attractions in India which, much as I love the life here, have no equivalent in Persia.

‘I must soak myself in the life and lore of this place—geology—natural history—botany—zoology—dialects—ethnology—archaeology—until it becomes as much a part of my life as India was.

‘On the other hand I feel more in touch with England than I ever did in India. *The Times* daily edition is on my table, as it was on Lorimer’s every day. Though it is a month or five weeks old it is still news—to me—and as I never if I can avoid it read more than one or at most two a day I can digest it and savour the best things. I particularly enjoy *The Times Literary Supplement* and I am making a practice of buying a book or two every month on the strength of its reviews. The united booksellers of Britain might do worse for themselves than to send it, instead of their own catalogues, to likely clients *in partibus infidelium* (in the political sense).’

By June I had finished my first I.B. Report, on an ambitious scale, and had secured Capt. Lorimer’s blessing. I was frankly delighted to receive Major Austin’s praise.

## WILD LIFE IN SOUTH-WEST PERSIA

'He has promised to put his best draftsman to make a lithograph of the map; he offers me a job in I.B. if I want one (which I do not, as now I have tasted the freedom of the desert I shall not put my head into a trap by sitting on an office chair in Simla). He says he will make the general layout of my report a standard form for all subsequent ones, and wants me to write another about Arabistan. [By 1913 I had written six or seven volumes, covering all SW. Persia.] This is good for me in every way as also the vague prospect of an "honorarium" which I badly want as I can save little of my pay, in spite of frugal living, as I must have good horses and good books, and my really excellent Persian servants cost money. The Government of India provide none of these things.'

In August, when the heat had somewhat abated, I made another expedition somewhat farther afield.

'As I scrambled down a gorge, leading my nag, I saw a bear with two cubs—the small cinnamon bear of these parts—shambling down the track ahead of me. I had a rifle with me but did not shoot. Why should I? This is their home and they do no manner of harm.'

'Later on I saw a leopard and in the plains or foothills hyaenas, ugly beasts with very small haunches and heavy forequarters and chests. I often saw on the outskirts of a camp the large bones of buffalo freshly cracked by their immensely powerful jaws. Wolves were not uncommon north of the Karun and the Karkhah, but I heard them in camp oftener than I saw them. They always give tongue at about the same time, two hours before dawn, an hour before cock-crow. They alone are really a menace to flocks. Lurs and Bakhtiari esteem the bear to be almost human in intelligence. They tell many stories of them—how they will never hurt women or girls but will hold them captive if they can with the ultimate aims on them that men would have. One old man told me he had himself seen a bear playing leap-frog over a strayed ass. They account for its intelligence by saying that the first bear was a tribesman who hid himself under a pile of wool in order to avoid entertaining Hazrat Ali, the patron

### THE OIL COMPANY'S STAFF

saint of Persians. His wife excused herself from giving hospitality on the ground that she was a lone woman and as such by custom exempt. But the Saint knew better, and called the man out from under the wool, saying "From now on you and your seed need not fear that you will entertain good men. You shall keep your covering: become a bear".

The heat of the summer made life in camp irksome. The only available lamp oil had a low flash-point and burned badly in summer: candles melted even in spring candlesticks. Fresh vegetables were hard to come by: fresh fruit was brought now and then on mules from Shushtar, but the supply was irregular. The Company's servants, in stone houses, were rather better off, but they too had hard times. The work went on steadily. Two rigs pounded night and day with percussion tools that are regarded to-day as curiosities: everything had to come from England, India, or America to Mohammerah, thence by river steamer to Ahwaz, thence after transshipment by tramway, to a point on the Upper Karun by a little sternwheeler, the *Shushan*, owned by Lynch Brothers, and thence by mule back or, after about June 1908, by a cart-road over the Tulkhaiyat (Tailor's Peak) to Masjid-i-Sulaiman. As many as 900 mules were in use in the following year—motors had not yet been acclimatized.

'The Company are doing fine work under great difficulties, which they make light of. It is a pity that their principals at home are not as sympathetic as the Simla I.B. and Major Cox, the Resident at Bushire whom I find to be most business-like, prompt and reasonable, though we have not met.

'I read the Bible and some classical work—Latin or English daily—and often the Prayer Book too, particularly the Psalms and the *Benedicite Omnia Opera* which represents just what I feel when I am in camp in rough weather in all seasons. There is something terrible and grand in thunder and lightning when one is in camp in the mountains; in flooded rivers which like the Karun will rise 40 feet in a few days; in hail

## THE OIL COMPANY LOSE HEART

which will kill cattle; in sun so hot that eggs will cook in the sand; and in a moon and stars so bright that they make travel by night a joy. I would give a week's pay to hear, and sing, the 104th Psalm in Clifton College Chapel. I write this on the 20th Evening of the month.

'I am still rather homesick for my Regiment, particularly to-day, when I found on the back of half a dozen labels on packages sent from Ambala as many messages, written in Gurmukhi or Urdu, from sepoy's wishing me well and asking me to come back soon because "your place is empty". And there were some letters to the same effect put inside the packages.'

Towards the end of April Reynolds told me that his Directors had told him that their funds (at this time supplied by the Burma Oil Company Ltd.) were exhausted and that they could not see their way to raising further capital for exploratory work under Mr. D'Arcy's concession. He had already spent as much as, and indeed more than, he could afford—about £250,000. The Burma Oil Company were disinclined to venture further capital. The decision reached, final and irrevocable, was that he was to cease work, dismiss the staff, dismantle anything worth the cost of transporting to the coast for re-shipment, and come home.

The news was to me quite unexpected. I knew nothing of such matters but by hearsay from drillers and from technical literature, but it seemed clear to me that no wells had been drilled to anything like sufficient depth to 'prove' the field and that it would be necessary to drill many more before its value could be assessed.

Lorimer was away and I had no cipher. I wrote hastily to Major Cox to tell him of what appeared to me to be, to quote my diary:

'a short-sighted decision, which may involve the cancellation of the D'Arcy Concession. The search for oil will quite certainly be continued, but by the Germans or by one of Rockefeller's Companies. In neither case will any difficulty be

## THE OIL COMPANY DECIDE TO STOP WORK

found in raising capital, It amazes me that the directors of the Concession Syndicate Ltd. [which at that time was operating the concession] should be in a position to risk the complete loss of a concession covering all oil deposits over the greater part of Persia, without consultation with the F.O. and without telling you or the Minister or the Government of India. This is the "neutral" zone. [Of Persia.] What is to stop a Russian controlled oil company from getting a new concession from Persia? What is to prevent C.S. Ltd. from selling D'Arcy's rights to an American or German Company? The directors of C.S. Ltd. are Scotsmen of the hard-headed, short-sighted sort who would not hesitate to do so if they saw a profit, and there is nothing to prevent them. Reynolds thinks they are trying to do so, though the Burma Oil Company took a financial interest in C.S. Ltd. because they did not want a rival company within reach of India, where they have something like a monopoly at present. It may be too late to prevent a stoppage of work here, but not too late to stop the dismantling of plant and the dispersal of trained staff. I am tired of working here for these stay-at-home business men who in all the years they have had the concession have never once come near it: — and — [other British firms operating in the Persian Gulf] are not much better. They have all the vices of absentee landlords.

'Cannot Government be moved to prevent these faint-hearted merchants, masquerading in top hats as pioneers of Empire, from losing what may be a great asset? I know that the Government of India regard the prospects of oil in SW. Persia as very poor, because they once sent one geologist to Persia (but not here) for a few weeks. Such obiter dicta should not carry weight.

'Tehran regards business enterprise in Persia in the "neutral" zone as embarrassing. Lord Curzon, who mentioned this place [Masjid-i-Sulaiman] as petroliferous in his book, should know what is afoot. He, at least, would understand.'

This entry concludes with the note: 'Wrote Cox to this effect.'

I discussed the whole situation long and earnestly with

## G. B. REYNOLDS

Reynolds. He was a self-trained geologist—he was, in fact, the only man at that time in the employ of C.S. Ltd. who knew anything of the geology of oil, or of the geology of Persia, to which no contributions of importance had been made since the days of W. K. Loftus, whose work dated from 1880 or so. I had learned some from my father who was a good geologist, and more from Reynolds: the smattering I had acquired convinced me that his confidence was justified and that his courage would be rewarded. In the bitterness of his soul he said many hard things of the faint-hearted and peevish men at home who were so ready to abandon an enterprise which might mean so much to Britain and to Persia. The diary note recorded above is but a faint echo of what he said. He knew them personally: I had not met them. He decided to go ahead and to await written confirmation, declaring, on the strength of one or two minor errors in coding, that it would not be safe to act on the telegram, and that he would await written confirmation. Before this could happen Well No. B. 1, as recorded elsewhere, struck oil. The service rendered by G. B. Reynolds to the British Empire and to British industry and to Persia was never recognized. The men whom he saved from the consequences of their own blindness became very rich, and were honoured in their generation.

Reynolds left Persia soon afterwards and did not return: he went to Venezuela, and up to the time of his death in 1925 was actively engaged there in the pioneer work in which he excelled and which he loved so well. He was a great Englishman, worthy of the Royal Indian Engineering College at Cooper's Hill of which he was one of the first graduates. He was able to endure heat and cold, disappointment and success, and to get the best out of every Persian, Indian, and European with whom he came in contact, except his Scottish employers, whose short-sighted parsimony had so nearly wrecked a great enterprise.

## OIL IS STRUCK

Early on May 26th one of the two wells struck oil—at 1,200 feet. I was sleeping outside my tent close by and ran to the spot as soon as I heard the unaccustomed noise and shouting. It rose 50 feet or so above the top of the rig, smothering the drillers and their devoted Persian staffs who were nearly suffocated by the accompanying gas. I at once sent news to Bushire, via the Persian office at Shushtar—to the annoyance of G. B. Reynolds a month later when he found that his principals had first heard the news from the Foreign Office. It had not occurred to me that he would follow his usual routine and send a courier to Ahwaz or Mohammerah with telegrams to be dispatched thence. As I had no Telegraph Code I wired to Lorimer: 'See Psalm 104 verse 15 third sentence and Psalm 114 verse 8 second sentence'.<sup>1</sup> This told him the news and in the circumstances was quite as effective as a cipher.

My comments to my father were brief:

'It is a great event: it remains to be seen whether the output will justify a pipe line to the coast, without which the field cannot be developed. It will provide all our ships east of Suez with fuel: it will strengthen British influence in these parts. It will make us less dependent on foreign-owned oil-fields: it will be some reward to those who have ventured such great sums as have been spent. I hope it will mean some financial reward to the Engineers who have persevered so long, in spite of their wretched top-hatted directors in Glasgow, in this inhospitable climate. The only disadvantage is personal to myself—it will prolong my stay here!'

Reynolds's first concern was to save as much as possible of the oil that was running to waste. A great pit or reservoir was dug in the hard red clay about 200 yards from the well: the well was capped—no easy task—and the stream of oil diverted into the pit, whence it was

<sup>1</sup> 'That he may bring out of the earth oil to make him a cheerful countenance'; 'the flint stone into a springing well.'



## OIL IN ANCIENT TIMES

carried by earth thereafter for use as fuel in the other drilling engines and for a score of other purposes for which wood had hitherto been used.

One well on this field, some years later (F. 7), was producing 450,000 gallons a day, nearly twice as much as the Abadan refinery required in 1914. In fifteen years it produced nearly 7 million tons of oil. It was worthy of Reynolds.

Writing to my father later, I sketched briefly the historical aspect of the oil industry in this part of the world.

‘This is really the home of the world’s oil industry. Ur of the Chaldees, whence Abraham started his journey westwards, is known locally as Mughir=Umm Qir—the mother of pitch. Noah’s ark, like local craft, was “pitched within and without” and the tower of Babel (Bab-il—the gate of God) was built with “slime” [i.e. bitumen] for mortar. Herodotus mentions the practice and mentions the town of Hit whence all the bitumen used in Mesopotamia still comes. Layard constantly refers to its use in his Nineveh and Babylon and there is a tradition here that the burning fiery furnace into which Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were cast was at Kirkuk where there is a lot of natural gas always alight, and Plutarch probably mentions this place in his Life of Alexander. It does not speak well for British business men who have been dominant here for half a century that they should have left this undeveloped for so long.’

I wrote almost daily to my father and mother in order, as I put it, ‘to unwind my mind’ every day before going to bed, and in my letters at this time are many references to India and domestic political issues. My father was inclined to take the orthodox Liberal view; I sympathized, but could not believe that Liberal institutions could be transplanted in Eastern countries.

‘I am not indifferent to the claims of Indians to responsible and high office. I go farther in my inexperience than older

## CONSTITUTIONAL DISORDERS

men. But the claims of Indians are not synonymous with those of Bengalis or Hindus. If India had male suffrage to-day otherwise than under British rule, few Bengalis would be allowed to speak in public outside Bengal and only in parts of that province, and few Hindus would hold office in the Punjab.

‘I am inclined to agree with you about the Licensing Bill, but all this talk about a licence not being property, and of “the State” coming into its own again is wind. Public expediency is the only valid argument—*salus reipublicae suprema lex*. Church schools or ecclesiastical or educational foundations might be “recovered” by the State if these arguments as applied to licences are valid. In my view each case must be judged on its merits and “principles” do not really exist in politics, except for party political purposes. Mitra on “Indian Problems” is first class; please recommend it to anyone who is interested in and also cares about India.’

By July 7th it was 124° in my tent every day: a hot wind blew continuously from the north-west. My men, hardy Punjabi Mussulmans, found it hard to endure: their mounts found it even harder and lost condition. But we were all delighted that we had not come here in vain and that the men for whose safety we were responsible had found what they sought.

Constitutional troubles were just beginning to be acute in Tehran.

‘The Shah (Muhammad Ali) has struck hard at the Parliamentarians. Whatever the merits—if any—of the parties I am sure of this—Parliaments are not for the East and we shall do an ill turn to India if we introduce Parliamentary institutions. Everyone is talking about them—they are the modern road for ambitious men to power and wealth but they will never take root in this soil or anywhere East of Suez—indeed I sometimes doubt if they will ever take root East of the English Channel and the North Sea.

‘I am much alone here, but solitude has no adverse effect on me. The trivial round and common task occupies my

## A HOT WEATHER SURVEY TOUR

mind almost to the exclusion of vain desires to be back in my Regiment or to be anything else than what I am. Only when the English mail is a day or two late and I do not get your letters and *The Times* do I begin to wish for what is beyond my reach. The element of stodgy and phlegmatic solidity which is far from philosophic in me serves me well and I do not worry. I should be glad of some Dent's *Temple Classics* which are so well printed and compact that a week's reading will go in a saddle-bag.

'I ride a good deal farther than of old—by sending a spare horse ahead I can get from the oilfields to Ahwaz in a day—8 or 10 hours. It costs me something to mount myself adequately as I ride 14 stone, but I do not easily tire the horse, or myself. Dr. Young says that I am a standing contradiction of all medical laws, for after three months in a small tent I am as fit as ever, though thin. The fact is that I eat very little and so do not overwork my stomach; what I do eat is what the nature of the country provides and my own men eat. The experience of centuries in such matters is not to be ignored with impunity.'

Then follows a description of a typical hot weather survey tour.

'I left camp at 4 p.m. on July 7th 1908: 124° F. and rode or walked for six hours. Ate some dates and bread and slept under the stars till 4 a.m. Then four hours journeying—a long halt under the scanty shade of a small tree till 4 p.m.—then forward again, to the foot of the Mungasht Mountains with a week's dry barley bread, thin as paper, some dates, lentils, curry powder and a live goat. On July 8th I spent the heat of the day in a cave—sending my mount and two mules 3 miles away for water. Then a stiff climb up the rocky slopes, sparsely wooded with a kind of oak. It was a joy to be among trees again. Our guide spoke glowingly of a spring half way up the hill—sweet as sugar, clear as crystal, abundant as a river. When we reached it we found it almost dry and its exit choked with the droppings of ibex and bear. We cleaned it out and got a bucket full in the course of half an hour, in cupfuls.

## MALAMIR AND THE MUNGASHT

‘The guide is an uncouth son of the hills—the accuracy of what he says must be judged by the probable state of his own feelings and his estimate of our own—like a journalist, in fact. If he is tired, the safest place to stop is nearby: if his home is within reach, it is unsafe to stop short of it and any springs elsewhere are dry. If, however, I take the responsibility of disregarding his expert advice he bears me no malice but explains that he was thinking of *my* comfort. On July 10th we reached the plateau on the top of the Mungasht—9,600 feet—and sought for snow in the rifts. Alas there was none and so no water. I climbed a few hundred feet more to the highest peak and spent some hours with my plane table, enjoying the finest view I have yet seen. On three sides a vast tangle of mountain running NW. and SE., tier upon tier; below, just visible at one or two points, the white stream of the Karun river in a very deep gorge cutting through each of the great mountain ranges in succession. To the south east, the formless masses of gypsum and bedded sandstones steeply tilted. On the far horizon, towards sundown, I just caught for a moment the glint of the sun on the Persian Gulf 150 miles away. It was worth the long journey. No European has so far as I know ever been here before, though Sir Henry Layard, author of *Early Adventures*, has made the Malamir and Qala Tul plains at its foot famous.

‘I went back by another route, spending the night at a spring under an old cypress tree. Here we feasted, for villagers camped nearby sold us eggs, milk, curds, butter, cheese and chicken—food to which I have been a stranger for some time. The goat is still with us and is growing fat.

‘The next day brought me to the Malamir plain, famous for Sassanian bas-reliefs: the track which I followed was well graded and walled and, in places, well paved. It is certainly Sassanian, perhaps even older, and was probably built by the rulers of this country 1,500 or 2,000 years ago to make it easier for them to enjoy the cool air of the mountains. I shot a mountain sheep on the way down: we ate it that night—another feast, so we gave the goat to our guide in lieu of cash: on paper I made a profit, and he was well content.

## SASSANIAN REMAINS

'On July 18th we crossed the Malamir plain by following a track described by Layard. From this point onwards the map shows a blank—"unexplored"—so I moved slowly, plane-tabling all the way. From the crest of the hills NW. of the plain I looked down on the marsh lying below at the foot of a limestone cliff in which I am told that Brahminy duck nest in season. The plain was alive with black and white storks—*Lak-lak*—the noise they make when returning to their nest on the house-tops. They always walk into the sun, so that their quarry—frogs and locusts—are not warned of coming doom by a shadow. They are affectionately called "Haji" *Lak-lak* because they migrate south to Africa via Mecca and they are never molested even by boys. The owner of a house on which they build a nest is counted lucky and it is pleasant to watch them feeding their ungainly young by regurgitating half-digested food into their open beaks.

'The view from the summit was superb and I lingered long there with my plane table, to the distress of my party. Then north-west down the ancient Sassanian track, to a spring where we ate sparsely and slept hard but soundly among the oaks till "the roseate hues of early dawn" and "the brightness of the day" told me that we had overslept. By midday we reached a fertile little village in a narrow valley with limestone cliffs rising almost sheer on either side. The centre was cultivated—young rice of a brilliant green hue: apricots, figs, grapes and other fruit in the gardens for the asking, but also a plague of mosquitoes. The Karun here looked blue and flowed rapidly. I plunged in and gave the beasts a wash to cheer them.

'Next day down the Karun which here rises when floods are heavy as much as 50 feet. I saw the pillars of a bridge standing stark in the stream, fully exposed to the tremendous force of the water but looking as if they had been erected a few years ago. How the builders—it is certain that the bridge dates either from Sassanian or early Moslem times—were able to erect these solid masonry pillars in the midst of a swift stream, with such strong cement that it has bound stone to stone perfectly and made the whole pillar a single monolith, is something worthy of close investigation.'

## THE MESS OF THE 32ND PIONEERS

I spent another ten days on survey in this region, twice swimming the river with a guide, the instruments being placed inside an inflated skin. Then I returned to the oilfields and spent some days working up my reports and maps.

But this life, much as I loved it, had not yet weaned me from my Regiment. In sending to my mother some photographs of the interior of the Mess of the 32nd Sikh Pioneers at Ambala I wrote:

'The Mess was—I should like to write *is*—my Indian home. For two years as Mess Secretary I was manager and house-keeper, with charge of the servants and, like Martha, busied with much serving. I put up the horns you see with my own hands. The furniture dates from long ago: we have all cared for it. For fifty years one generation after another has put by some of their small pay to improve the Mess. It has a good Library: the plate has been presented, bit by bit—some of it by officers on joining. De Courcy and I gave the silver lamp stand. The sociable settle you see in the centre was old in Mutiny days. It enables three persons to read by the light of the swinging lamp above without drawing chairs together in an unseemly way. The piano is a good one and we were never without someone who could play it well. The Regimental band instruments are ours—bought like some other things with war gratuities after a campaign. And the Indian officers and men are as proud of these things as we are.'

Some fifteen years later the Regiment we loved so dearly was disbanded on the plea of economy: the plate and furniture dispersed: the men scattered. It had an almost unique record of service in a score of wars and of consistent sturdy loyalty. With it died the India I knew, and the devotion, pride, and fealty of thousands of living men to the something of which, during their service, they had been integral parts. *Sunt lacrimae rerum*.

Perhaps because I started my schooling in the National school at Sparrow Hill in Rochdale I always retained

an affection for Rochdale and for Lancashire which my brothers and sisters never fully shared. I wrote to my mother, who had *sent me some newspaper reports of a* visit of my father (then at Worcester) to his old parish:

'I share your affection for Rochdale. It has a place in my heart and memory. I read the Parish Magazine and saw the familiar names with particular pleasure. What a wonderful reception Rochdale people gave him and with what joy they must have done so. I know little of English people but so far as my experience goes I prefer Lancashire folk to any other.'

(*To my father.*) 'I see your successor preached on the text "Understandest thou what thou readest?" I hope he pointed out that the man was reading aloud and that today, as doubtless then, reading aloud is the rule in the East and many literate persons can scarcely take in what they read silently. As I write half a dozen of my Indian cavalymen are reading the Koran aloud in their tents and when the mail comes they read their letters aloud to themselves, in corners or in a low voice.

'You ask me what fundamental difference I see between Persians and Indians. I will try to explain. The "untutored mind" of Pope's "poor Indian" (Hindu) sees God in clouds and hears him in the winds, or as some other poet puts it, sees "sermons in stones . . . and God in everything". He is a polytheist in practice though the Brahmins doubtless conceive an underlying unity. He has an immense capacity for reverence, respect, admiration, adoration, worship of the unknown gods and of the marks of goodness and holiness in others. He is never a scoffer; I have never seen an Indian jeer at a "holy man"—of another creed, however ridiculous and disreputable he may appear to us. This may be because there is an element of fear in his awe, which seems to me absent from most Moslems' minds, and to me the value of a religion is in inverse proportion to its capacity to instil *fear*. He is separated from the rest of Asia by a vast gulf. Caste and caste rules are a fence put up to prevent us and others from falling into this gulf. East represented by the Hindu, and West, represented by everything west of the Indus, can

### EASY-GOING MOSLEMS

scarcely meet. In a spiritual and cultural sense the Hindu is even less at home in Persia than in England. He is totally different from his neighbours at every point.

‘Persians are easy-going Moslems, monotheists like their Parsee forebears, whose fine temple near the oilfields gives its modern name to the place. They have the English or, at least, the European sense of humour. The Indian is so sensitive in the presence of men of another creed or race that he imagines insults where none are intended and mistakes shyness or awkwardness for an assumption of superiority. It does not seem to occur to a Persian that Europeans like myself could suppose ourselves to be their superiors by race or religion. For me to beat a peccant groom with my own hand would be in the eyes of all, including the victim, a tacit admission on my part that I was his equal. It would not surprise me if he were to strike me back—assuming of course he was strong enough to risk the encounter. It would not be regarded as *lèse majesté* on his part; the onlookers would not be greatly surprised or very indignant. I should tell one of my men to do so, and if it were a question of beating him for a gross offence they would approve. Hindus seldom make jokes: or laugh. Persians do so all day. Hindus are little given to Rabelaisian stories. Persians revel in yarns which make Burton’s footnotes to the *Arabian Nights* seem tame.

‘My sowars were glad to see a photograph of you—“a venerable wise mulla: and he has given his son a good education, as our mullas do: and now we know why you do not drink or smoke, and that is why you spend the day reading and writing”.

‘My library grows weekly and I am beginning to form some opinions on Indian questions—Imperial Preference—State Railways—canal finance—frontier policy—and to discover reasonable grounds for some of my prejudices. The article in *The Times* “A Year with the Americans” convinces me that co-education will not take root and should not be encouraged. The violence of Suffragettes and their refusal to exclude the possibility of bomb outrages on Fenian lines almost but not quite makes me opposed to Votes for Women.



## A PARADISE FOR GEOLOGISTS

'I am heart and soul in sympathy with your views on social reform and hope that the new Dean of Worcester [Moore Ede] who is of the same mind will work hand in hand with you. But I should not like to see all the Cathedral staff "reformers". It takes all sorts to make a Church and there is room in a Cathedral for scholars and for one who gently and quickly prepares men's minds and changes men's hearts. Without this preparation of the soil, reforms will bear bitter fruit. You of course fulfil all three rôles.

'I heard from India that the snakes I sent in formalin to India include thirty species, of which three are new to science. One, a blind *Typhlops* has been named *Wilsoni*. Again *Non omnis moriar*. Several others are new to SW. Persia. You were doing the same in the greater sphere of Astronomy fifty years ago. I am encouraged to discover more snakes, though most of them are poisonous. There is a great field here for an entomologist and probably for a botanist.

'It is of course a paradise for geologists. We do not yet know, G. B. Reynolds tells me, anything worth knowing of the manner in which oil is formed in certain rocks, nor their formation, or even their correct place in the local sequence. With more wells being bored we shall acquire a vast amount of fresh knowledge: meanwhile no-one can yet say why Mamatain was a failure and Masjid-i-Sulaiman a success, or why Qasr-i-Shirin produced nothing.

'I have been reading T. E. Brown's *Poems*—he attracts me as does no other poet—his *Foc'sle Yarns* and *Betsey Lee* are a joy and I am learning a lot of his shorter poems by heart as I ride, among other things. It does not blind me to what I can see and it keeps my mind active.'

A week later I wrote to my father:

'I have your Liberal leanings in home politics but abroad and in India I find myself in the opposite camp largely because those who express "Liberal" views are so illiberal in their judgments which are seldom, so far as I can gather, based upon experience. To a man of science a theory is a logical explanation of observed facts: but few political authorities and no Liberals that I can think of trouble to

### ‘THE ORIENT IN LONDON’

observe all relevant facts or to make deductions from them. They bring preconceived English theories with them and hastily apply them—a system of trial and error. The trials are those of the servants of Government abroad: the errors are those of Westminster. Conservatives seem to me more pragmatic: and they do not voice their ignorance so dogmatically. To read *The Nation* is to become suspicious of even the *bona fides* of Radicalism: to read *The Standard* makes me distrust the complacency of the leader writers. But as a Government servant I have no politics.

‘A word more about India. I hate “Orient in London” missionary and other shows which represent India as a country of sword-swallowers and jugglers, Juggernaut (Jagan Nath) processions (which kill fewer persons in a year than are killed in London on the roads in a week), tawdry pomp and debased taste. People write endlessly on Indian superstition, Persian immorality, Negro dirt, Arab cruelty. By inference we are guiltless of such things. You and I know that they are all to be found in England and are just as general. How should we like Indians to be taught to regard the Old Bailey and the Aquarium, the Crystal Palace and St. James Restaurant as typical of English life? The only missionaries who will succeed are doctors, or men who have taken the vows of poverty and celibacy.’

‘(L., Aug. 5) I am in my new tent—bigger than the old one but not cooler. It has four doors, but two are closed to keep out the burning wind. Through one of them I look out upon my horses and men: through the other across a mile of barren rocky ground beyond which is a ravine so full of gas that wild animals—foxes, jackals, porcupine, jerboas and even birds—are found dead. On the horizon are low hills 300 feet high with white patches of gypsum, up one of which I climb daily at sunset for fresh air and a view. Below it runs the main road, newly built, up which pass droves of donkeys or mules bringing wood or straw, and carts or *gins* (like English timber wains) bringing machinery and pipes, each pulled by from eight to twelve mules.

‘Now and then a party of local Bakhtiari levies rides by, looking like stage assassins, with Martini-Henry rifles and

## A CHEAP SYSTEM OF TAXATION

50 or more cartridges and a knife or two. A detachment occupies a tower overlooking the camp office and headquarters. The Company pay the tribal chiefs a large sum for these "guards": it is of course a sort of blackmail: the tribal Khans pay them nothing. The guards levy toll upon the local labourers and are changed from time to time so as to give everyone a chance.

'The local labourer is well paid, but has to pay something to the head of his gang, and the head of his village, who in turn has to pay the tribal chiefs. It is a rough and ready and very cheap system of taxation, not so harsh as to discourage enterprise, and those who benefit are all part of the tribal group—the Bakhtiaris, in whose territory we work. I do not think it causes more resentment or trouble than our Indian system and it is much cheaper—no officials, no pensions, no paper.

'Apart from these are the real producers of food—the herdsmen and their herds, and the villagers, in reed huts, waiting patiently for the first rains to plough and for the fresh grass that will spring up, even in autumn.'

'(L., Sept. 1908) I rode 30 miles today from camp to join the river steamer *Shushan* on its way from near Shushtar to Ahwaz on the Upper Karun. I started at 4 a.m. and got to the river bank at midday. It was pleasant to leave the barren desolate hills, radiating heat, and the valleys, waterless but for salt or gypsum, and oil-laden streams smelling like a gas works, and to enter the milder plain. I saw wild pig and a leopard, also several porcupine while I was still among the gypsum and sandstone hills whose brilliant colours at dawn are a perpetual joy to me.

'Once in the plain the wind was not so hot: there were jerboas to watch, and a fox or two: but no tents or herds, for everything is dry. The steamer did not arrive and I halted by the river, as broad as the Severn at Worcester, near a village, and swam in the cool milk-white water. A small group of men and women watched me. My Persian servant told them to be off. What were they looking at? Had they no manners? They replied: "A woman drawing water was taken by a shark here last week and we are watching to see

## SHARKS AND BUFFALOES

if it comes again." I was too proud to leave the water, but I splashed vigorously after that and did not bathe again. I have since heard that sharks from the Persian Gulf have been seen north of Shushtar where this river crosses the Aqili plain.

'I had a luscious dinner of fresh dates and camel's milk and eggs, and slept in spite of sandflies with my saddle as a pillow, my horse tethered fore and aft, and a rope from the halter round my hand, lest it be stolen, my revolver under my head. Next morning at dawn the *Shushan* came round the bend: it is the size of a large house-boat, a stern wheeler. The Captain is a genial old salt, with a very English prejudice against "native food". He lives and feeds his passengers on tinned provisions from England: tinned milk: tinned beef: tinned vegetables—in this land of plenty, for fear of some mysterious infection, and would not touch my fresh dates, nor would he think of touching apricots or figs or grapes, though he makes an exception in favour of oranges and, I gather, arak which is cheaper than whisky though that, at Basrah, is only 2s. or so a bottle. Last month he slew a 9-foot shark near Shushtar which had killed two boys and a girl.

'From the deck I looked across the river and the yellow sunbaked plain to the hills I know so well. Steep mud banks, looking almost golden in the brilliant sunlight are a background to patches of green reeds and a yellow flowering plant like gorse.

'We passed a herd of buffaloes wallowing in the mud: on the back of each was a brown baby or two, naked and happy, twisting the buffaloes' tails in the hope of making them swim across the river and back, though that was just how some of them were killed last week. It sounds unwise and wrong, but I do not suppose that English children are very much more careful—or even their parents, judging from the drowning accidents one hears of.

'These children can swim as soon as they can walk and they are lovely to look at, both boys and girls, with fine bodies and delicate features. I have seen some beautifully made young men and girls: the young men retain their good looks longer than the girls. Everyone marries young: prostitution and pre-marital sexual relations are almost

## A GREAT MAN

unknown except in the big towns. The penalty for girls is death and the man may be and very often is killed by the girl's relatives for the honour of the family.'

'(L., Sept. 8, 1908) *Super flumina*. By the waters of Babylon I still sit, though I do not weep. My "captivity" is due to the fresh "constitutional" troubles in Tehran and elsewhere which may spread. As oil has been found and as prospects are now good the Home Government wish to ensure that the D'Arcy Exploration Company may continue their work without hindrance. They are ready to send more men if need be. But for troubles in Persia I should be back in India.

'I hear that the Company had given up all hope of finding oil and had given instructions to Reynolds to close down the work: had they been a little quicker in sending him these orders, or he a little quicker in obeying them, it would have been left to another to make this great discovery. I do not suppose, however, that Reynolds will get either fame, money or credit for all the work he has done here. He is a great man, who inspires real respect in Englishmen and Canadians and real affection in Persians and Arabs: he also has remarkable gifts of organization and management. But he is not easy to deal with and his correspondence with his directors is sarcastic and bitter—I am not surprised, for they are unsympathetic and seem from the letters that I have read to be stupid and not at all appreciative of what he has done for them. But his letters do not help him.

'Major Cox whom I have not yet met, though I have been under his orders for nearly a year, has recommended me for higher pay

"in view of the excellent work being done by this hard-working officer, whose energy and perseverance will doubtless commend him to the Foreign Dept."

This very generous testimonial came as a complete surprise, for he has never yet sent me a word of commendation; I suppose he has heard of me from Lorimer with whom I am more in touch, though I seldom see him.

'I spent a whole week at Ahwaz ostensibly delving into the records of the Vice Consulate but really eating fresh

#### MATERIAL FOR THE INTELLIGENCE BRANCH

vegetables and fruit and seeing something of the small European community there—Lynch's agents, pleasant, hospitable and well educated—really good representatives of their country, and a Dutchman Ter Meulen—a rival firm with a heart as stout as his body and even more hospitable. They live lives almost as lonely as mine, with none of my interests: they are unmarried, but they have good houses.

'I accumulated more material for the Intelligence Branch which should please Major Austin. My work for him is really a side-show—not known even to Cox—done on my own responsibility and mostly at my own expense—hence my inability to go about *more Indico* with tents and tables and beds and chairs, camp baths and the rest of it. The Foreign Dept. naturally do not tell me to do it, but tactfully don't tell me *not* to. They give me no orders—I am an unknown and inexperienced subaltern and any orders they gave me might be misinterpreted or injudiciously acted on—but lie low like Brer Rabbit and say nothing and leave me free to act. If anything goes wrong, they can (and probably will) blame me: if all goes right they may (and possibly will) praise me. It is really a good system—if there is a gentleman at both ends and one like Cox or Austin in the middle to act when necessary as an interpreter and buffer or brake.

'Vacuum flasks are no good to me, thanks. I want to keep things cold: but there is no ice plant nearer than Bacrah to make them so. Anyway, one needs cold drinks by the gallon, not the pint.'

'(L., Sept. 15, 1908) I am back from a first visit to Fallahi-yeh, a marshy district some 20 miles ENE. of Mohammerah and 40 miles or so SE. of Ahwaz. On the first day I spent eight hours in the saddle over bare desert which I used to think uninteresting and monotonous compared with the hills. My Arab guides and companions are teaching me better. It is seamed with canals of great antiquity; forming part of at least two, perhaps three systems, the most recent of which is possibly not later than the fourteenth century; the first may date from Sumerian times. Older even than those are the old water courses which carry the storm and floodwater, shallow depressions marked only by more or different kinds of grasses.

## THE DESERT

These date from prehistoric times when the country was well-wooded and, in the absence of any canals, floodwater took a different course.

‘Every mile of desert has its own name and its own customary (tribal) owner: barley or wheat is sown in patches wherever it will grow by tribesmen who travel 50 or 60 miles from the river and date groves to plough and sow, returning five months later to reap (with sickles). There is no drinkable water except on the surface, so at harvest time they bring their own. They separate the grain from the straw by making animals trample it out, and by drawing a wooden machine with iron blades over it. They winnow by throwing wooden spadefuls into the air when the north-west *shamal* wind blows strongly. Then they bring pack animals and sacks to carry away the grain: the straw, now chopped fine, they burn unless they can get a fair price for it in the towns to burn bricks with or for animal feed. It is all “primitive” but simple and sensible and it could not be practised if among themselves they were not very honest: each man knows his field and his land mark and disputes are rare. They are settled not by Courts of Law but by tribal courts presided over by the tribal chief.

‘We camped in the desert near some camel-owning Arabs and I had a fine meal of camel’s milk and dates and a little barley\*bread with good black coffee in abundance. Next day we entered the date groves, a complicated maze of canals and swampy ground, swimming our mounts again and again across the canals. The Shaikh of Fallahiyeh was hospitable as usual and fed us all royally. In return I gave his little son a watch. Next day I went on to Buzi, a little hamlet on a creek leading to the Persian Gulf which has never been placed on the map before. I was of course taking bearings and making notes all day and need a week to work them up into proper form. This part of the world is quite inaccessible to mule or camel transport: only the local dugout canoe—*bellam*—can bring goods from Mohammerah, though a little (largely smuggled) reaches the district by Buzi or the salt-water creeks which have yet to be mapped.

‘I returned to Mohammerah by canoe along a narrow canal,

## MOHAMMERAH AND BASRAH

now almost silted up which joins (or leaves) the Karun at Marid, where a dam or sill across the river once forced water down it into the now salt and ruined desert. The date groves of Mohammerah were a welcome sight: every tree with a crown of half a dozen bunches of ripe dates of every shade of golden brown, each bunch weighing from 10 to 30 pounds: they sometimes weigh twice as much. They have romantic names—"Bride's fingers" (long) Luscious buttons, &c.

'The only river steamer to Ahwaz had left Mohammerah a few hours before I arrived, so I found myself with six welcome days on my hands as the guest of old William McDouall. I went on board the outgoing mail-steamer and stayed to dinner with the hospitable master, one Moxon, but made special friends with an attractive young mail officer, who had got into trouble for throwing overboard in harbour a rowdy young Indian who was molesting Indian passengers and would not go on shore.

'Next day (Sunday), though I had no clothes but those I had travelled in for a week, I went up the river to Basrah by canoe, starting at 4 o'clock so as to enjoy the cool breezes and called on the Consul F. E. Crow, whose wife and daughters I met and liked well. They gave me lunch and I found Crow very well informed: he knows Constantinople and Asiatic Turkey well and knows all about the Baghdad Railway. He has no illusions about the Turkish "Constitution", but is satisfied that the Turks have no intention of making it work on "constitutional" lines. They will be, as at present, inefficient but on the whole genial and agreeable exponents of paternal despotism and *dolce far niente*. This he claims is what Arabs and Persians and Kurds require and will end by desiring after some experience of parliamentary government by place-seekers and adventurers. He has a great respect for the Turkish army and is rather hostile to the Government of India: he was not enthusiastic about the discovery of oil at Masjid-i-Sulaiman. It would lead to trouble with the Persians—and he was once Vice Consul at Tehran—and with the Turks, for the Shatt-al-Arab is their river and Persians use it only by custom and sufferance.

'Mrs. Crow was a good hostess: both the daughters most



## BACK IN AHWAZ

pleasant. I realized with a shock that I had not seen a skirt (other than Persian) for nearly a year and here I was in travel-stained clothes on a Sunday at the Consular table.'

A week later I wrote to my father (Sept. 20):

'I am now back in Ahwaz where I rejoice at your marvelous versatility—H.M. of the King's School, Canon, expert on Playgrounds and Infant Health, epigraphist and scholar all at once. I wish I could hope some day to compete. I have been entertaining and been entertained by Perceval Landon, of *The Daily Telegraph*, who has arrived here from Isfahan. He was very stimulating company: not widely read, I should say, but experienced in travel, observant, and with many friends in public life. But I disagree with his advocacy of Anglo-Russian intervention as a remedy for present ills. He has seen things from too close. The masses are little affected by "movements": agriculture is the main thing, not trade: the people want peace and low taxation. A Constitution will give them neither: they can always rebel or find other means to prevent a tyrannical governor from going too far. Could they do so under a highly organized government of the country by the town-bred clerical and semi-Europeanized classes?

'Landon had much to say of Morley: he and the Government of India are agreed as to certain reforms, but his doctrinaire colleagues want him to go farther than he is prepared to go. He is a bit of an autocrat, it seems, but his speeches on India deal with realities—unlike H. H. Asquith and Lloyd George who successfully hide reality with high-sounding phrases. Landon said that Churchill would now fain join the Tariff Reformers, if he dared. I am, after much doubting, a Tariff Reformer myself. There is substance in Lorimer's aphorism that manufactured goods benefit the country that makes them more than the foreign buyer. In the long run every country will want to perform within its own frontiers all the skilled processes which go to convert raw material into finished goods: India will lead the way because we have led her.'

'(L., Oct. 20) I have made another long Intelligence and

### 'THE BIGOTRY I DAILY ENCOUNTER'

Mapping tour. On the first day I stopped at Jaru where the Masjid-i-Sulaiman-Ram Hormuz route crosses the Ahwaz-Isfahan track. Here I met, under the only shady tree, a well-educated Persian and an English-speaking nephew who earnestly condoled with me on being "constrained to dwell with Mesech and have my habitation among the tents of Kedar". The older man said that ten days among them (he came from Isfahan) had made "his times bitter like those of a dog". The contrast between their easy, cultivated talk and absence of any prejudice against me as a foreigner was in pleasant contrast with the bigotry I daily encounter, though I seldom record it in my letters. Though I wear Persian clothes when away from towns or camp and conform to Persian customs in outward things my servants are often reviled because they are in the service of an infidel and I am, in large villages and towns, often spat at in the streets or abused as a Christian or a European—I am not sure which. It is consoling to discover that these rustics irritate an educated Persian more than they annoy me, but neither of them were of the governing class whose little finger would be thicker, in the aggregate, than the loins of the Shah and all his Governors.

'Next day I went to my old haunt at Mamatain: and thence two days' journey to Dishmuk, a place hitherto unvisited by any European, unmapped and rather inaccessible, in the centre of the Kuhgalu country which lies between Behbahan and Isfahan which no-one has traversed since Stocquer and de Bode nearly a century ago. I took a good supply of purgatives, quinine and some telescopes as gifts: and I rode with my best horse, for the sake of my prestige and appearances, for a man is known here by his mount and accoutrements.

'The Kuhgalu are notorious robbers: their eyries are so inaccessible that no Persian Governor has had any success with them for half a century. I thought that if I could get in touch with them I might be able to do something to secure the safety of the Lynch road from Ahwaz to Isfahan.

'I camped at the foot of the great limestone mountains which run from near Behbahan to Malamir among oak trees. I was not welcomed: guides were promised but did not arrive:

## AN ESCORT

I carried no food and could buy little—only buttermilk and very dry bread and dates. They are frightened both of the Kuhgalu and of the vague terrors of oil development. I can sympathize in some measure. European penetration does not always on balance help an oriental country to a happier life and these people prefer to bear the ancient ills they know than to risk new and unknown trials.

‘When I started up the long valley leading to Dishmuk I had a guide with me: after two hours he refused to go farther, saying he would be killed by the fierce Teibis, who might also take me prisoner and hold me to ransom. My servants also took fright, so I sent them all back and went on alone, on my best horse, a fine stallion of very good breed, with my best rifle and some presents.

‘An hour later shots came over my head: I shouted friendly words, but more shots followed—I could not see the riflemen and I judged from their shooting that they were not out to kill. So I dismounted, took cover, loaded and fired a few rounds in the air, with more friendly protests. Presently a wild man appeared on the track, unarmed and clearly frightened. I said I was alone, on a visit to Ali Murad Khan Teibi of Dishmuk whose guest I should be.

‘He ran back, returning a few moments later with four armed men to whom I repeated the tale. They announced to my relief that they were Ali Murad’s men and would escort me to him, which they did with rough courtesy. They were the wildest lot in speech and appearance that I have yet seen—an almost unintelligible dialect with a lot of Pehlevi (old Persian) words: one of them had a home-made sling and killed a partridge with a stone at 80 yards to show his skill. They were thin, tough, wiry, barefoot, with spare homespun clothes, and leapt from rock to rock like goats. They would make grand infantry if not put into boots and drilled too much.

‘Another hour brought us to the top of the pass whence I looked down on Dishmuk, a collection of reed huts in the centre of a plain, nestling round a white fort built upon a limestone hillock. Round the plain were limestone mountains, sparsely wooded with oak, rising three or four thousand feet on every side and dominated by the Mungasht range.

'The village turned out to see who and what I was: a messenger had gone ahead and at the foot of the paved track which led steeply round and up to the fort a son of Ali Murad met me, a very handsome youth of 20 or so, magnificently built, with fine delicate features and good hands. He greeted me with quiet courtesy—in the local dialect—as if accustomed to receive total strangers in this way and escorted me, still mounted, to the door of the fort, where I dismounted and entered with my horse. Here the Khan himself met me, a man of 50, handsome as his son, a dignified figure dressed in the manner of Persians almost a century ago.

'He praised me for leaving my former escort of craven dogs and coming alone. I need fear nothing: the Teibi knew how to treat honoured guests. Tea was served, and coffee: I had of course removed my Persian travelling shoes before entering the room: a new pair was brought in order that I might don them within the fort. Then came talk and questions innumerable: then dinner. I was given a separate dish of mutton and rice, being an infidel: I ate of course with my hands, Persian fashion, after ceremonial washing with an ewer and basin that must have been 300 years old. Then more talk till about 9 o'clock when the family chaplain arrived to read the Quran and say prayers in which all joined. That night I slept with half a dozen men, including two unmarried sons, in the great dining-room on very comfortable bedding.

'Before dawn I was awakened by the call to prayer and whilst they said their prayers I read the small Apocrypha which I always carry, unless I have a Prayer Book, kissing it before replacing it in its case. This is the Persian custom with the Quran and brought me level. The chief saw me do it, and voiced his approval. Then he mounted me on one of his mares and we set out hunting: he wanted to see what I could make of my rifle. We went as far up a ravine as we could and then began climbing. Luckily I was nearly as fit as they were and could keep up with the third son who was the first to meet me. We went some 2,000 feet up when a barefooted scout let us know by a sign that game was in sight. I crept breathlessly up a tilted surface of limestone at an angle of 30° or more to the crest. Below me were ibex. I fired and got

## AT DISHMUK

one at 200 yards or so—a lucky shot—but missed another. With shouts of joy the scouts dashed down to cut its throat before it died and brought it back. The boy with me was as delighted as if he had done it himself, repeating to me “you have honoured the house—you have brought good luck”.

‘Then back—hungry—to a good dinner soon after midday. I dared not write notes or make observations in public lest I should arouse suspicion, but in the afternoon took a number of bearings from the fort. That afternoon the Khan asked me to tea in his *diwan* or public room where I could be seen by his henchmen. My rifle (a cavalry 0-303 with Vernier sights) was inspected by expert eyes, weighed and balanced by skilled hands and approved by everyone present. So also my binoculars and my saddle which had been brought in. I began to talk of returning. Ali Murad Khan would not hear of my returning after so short a stay.

‘After much talk he turned his attention to my stallion—its breed, its age and capacity. Might he put it to one of his mares?—I readily agreed. Perhaps to two—perhaps to three if possible? That might mean a longer stay but he would guarantee that it should be pleasantly spent. He would lend me a shot-gun: I should have a private room and every comfort that a Persian gentleman could desire. He was as good as his word.

‘I spent four more days with him, shooting every day and listening every evening to a blind story-teller, a well-known and popular figure in these remote parts. He had been in Isfahan three weeks ago and had a very good idea indeed of the truth behind the news or, at least, the news behind the newspapers. Events in Tehran and the character of the leading figures, their family history and political records, grain prices and harvest forecasts: the probable trend of events during the next few weeks: the names of new governors of cities and provinces and a few marriages in “high life” as the French imagine we say. After a little of this he would turn to romance, sometimes classical Persian poetry, sometimes topical adaptations of well-known stanzas of Sadi and Hafiz, sometimes an old Lur or Kuhgalu song, bringing in the names of famous tribal leaders of bygone days. He had an

## TWO STORY - TELLERS

unfailing memory and a voice like a bell. One night he recited the story of Sohrab and Rustam in its original form as told by Firdausi: it moved me almost to tears. Speaking nearly in the dark as we sat round the small charcoal fire he relied entirely on modulations of his voice to give dramatic effect to the successive speeches of the boy Sohrab and his old father Rustam.

'He held us spell-bound for nearly two hours; then tea was served, and water-pipes passed round. He took a little food and then began afresh. The family Chaplain came in and was received, as always, with respect; all rising to their feet except the Khan, who half rose. The Chaplain took his seat by the Khan, salutations were exchanged with ceremony, and the orator asked the Chaplain (a *Saiyid*) if it was his pleasure that the company should hear some religious verse. The Chaplain readily agreed, beginning with prayer, much as an English clergyman would do in similar circumstances, after first calling for water that all might perform ceremonial ablutions. Then he began by intoning in a high voice the call to prayer, for he was a *muezzin*: all stood and followed him in his genuflexions and prostrations whilst I stood awkwardly at the door, looking over the moonlit valley and stark hills beyond, across the parapet of the fort. Prayers ended we took our seats again and the blind man began his psalms: a great oratorical performance, followed by a prose narrative of the sad fate of the patron saint of Persia, the martyred Huzain which reduced many of his audience to genuine tears, though it is not yet the month (*Muharram*) in which his death is called to mind. He ended on a more joyful note.

'One night, as a change, the Khan summoned a local *darwish* to tell us amusing stories—in a dialect which I found it hard to follow. He had a merry face, a club of immense size as his stage "property", and a wonderful capacity for mimicry and gestures. This performance was not indoors but in the courtyard where half the village had assembled. I have never heard Persians laugh loudly or unrestrainedly before: they were as merry as British soldiers at a sing-song. A boy of 14 was with him as the butt of his jokes, or as his partner

## A GREAT EXPERIENCE

in imaginary misfortune: he too had his little jokes, on music-hall lines—of some of which the Lord Chamberlain, the L.C.C., and the Bishop of London would not have approved.

‘I noticed whenever we were riding that the Khan and his sons always looked to see how the acorns were ripening, for acorn bread is here a staple food in bad seasons for everyone—in good seasons for the poorer tribesmen. I have eaten little else here. The acorns are ground with a boulder on a great slab of rock and the flour or rather fibre left to soak in running water for two days or so to get the poison out of it. Then it is used like barley flour, or mixed with it. The product is harder than barley bread and needs a lot of chewing: it is also liable to constipate even a horse which is not used to it—but I have stomached it successfully!

‘At last I induced him to let me go, leaving my rifle as a present and telescopes for his sons, and some money for the blind story-teller. He was cordial to me to the last and provided me with an escort until almost in sight of “the black-hearted offspring of dogs on the other side of the Mungasht” as he described my Bakhtiari friends.

‘It was a great experience, but I shall not record it adequately in my official diary lest I be told not to do it again. The Government of India do not want to hear one day that one of their officers has got captured, or even wounded by tribes who are no concern of theirs. I had no business, strictly speaking, to go beyond Bakhtiari territory and this survey business is unofficial.

‘Yet the results promise well. I have opened up relations with a man of influence hitherto unapproachable by Persian officials or British Consuls, and if we ever find oil at Mamatain we shall look to him to provide labour and, at the least, not to let his men raid our camps. There might even be oil in his territory, though on a casual inspection I saw no hopeful formations. I have made a beginning in the task of getting people accustomed to the sight of a European and of making them realize that we are not so very different from them. At present many of them—like the Kuhgalus—use bullets as visiting cards. But this phase will pass.’

‘(L., Nov. 1) I am less optimistic than you are as to the

## UNEMPLOYMENT

future trend of unemployment in England. I am a Tariff Reformer, but see no early remedy for unemployment in that direction. It will affect few articles and may react on employment in Germany with whom we do more business than with all the British Empire except India, and experience shows that unemployment in Germany reacts unfavourably on us. I strongly favour apprenticeship, but it is useless without compulsory continuation schools and I do not trust Local Authorities in these matters. The Board of Education should come up to the collar as in other countries and accept responsibility for all education at public expense. We must learn to get better value for money as individuals and as a society: we must work harder, spend more on capital works like houses and roads and railways and schools and post-offices and art galleries, and less on consumption of imported food, clothes and drink.

‘There is just as much “unemployment” in primitive countries like this where no villager can ordinarily find enough to occupy him for over 150 days a year and can just raise a family on the result of his toil. The only way to abolish unemployment is to establish State slavery and fix wages at a low minimum.

‘As for Old Age Pensions the new Act is merely to regulate the expenditure of national conscience money: the only sound basis is a contributory scheme and we should start it *now* as in Germany. The new system is a clumsy effort to mitigate inequalities of social status and remuneration for which the State vaguely feels itself to be in some way responsible.

‘You will see from this that I am not less interested than of old in home affairs. *The Times* and *The Times Lit. Sup.* keep me abreast of the news. *The Times* forecasts are very good: how good one realizes when reading them six weeks later in the light of Reuter’s telegrams—themselves six days old.’

‘(L., Nov. 1) Thank you for Dryden’s Virgil. I read it alternately with T. E. Brown and some (literally) heavy works which I am studying when time allows. Pope and odd *Temple Classics* are also in my saddle-bags. I am now studying the Indian Penal Code against the day when I shall



## SUNDAY AND OTHER READING

have to pass an examination in Indian Law and Criminal Procedure.'

'(To my sister Mona in Ireland) What you say of the Gaelic League is much what I gathered between the lines of *The Times*. With their non-political aims I have much sympathy—as with Indian and other "nationalists" on the cultural side. But their mouthpieces are ardent politicians who are apt to wreck a cultural movement by using it as a political weapon. We have done badly in Ireland in the past, but surely we are making amends. I hope you run down foxes as successfully as bad employers.' (She was a Women's Trades Union Organizer.)

'(L., Nov. 5) My future movements are quite uncertain; the Government of India want to withdraw the Indian Guard I command, and have asked for my views. I want to return to India but hold on general grounds that the Guard should stay and have said so: if they agree I shall be another summer here.

'I need a critical edition of the whole or some of the New Testament embodying the latest research, as a poor substitute for Sunday churchgoing, the absence of which from life is to me still a deprivation. I have some of your sermons and essays and nearly 100 books, all solid. I have leisure to read and to think, and criticism stimulates the faculties particularly if a man lives alone as I do. I am good friends with the drillers and see something of Reynolds the Chief Engineer and the excellent Doctor Young, but their interests are mainly professional, though Young is a connoisseur of music.

'(L., Nov. 16) I write ten days out from Ram Hormuz, squatting as usual on the ground writing in the light of a candle in a very small tent upon a despatch box. I was reading Muir's *Life of Mohamed*; I am now turning to Lyall's *Asiatic Studies* as an antidote, for it clearly differentiates between Christianity and Islam. I cannot sympathize much with Islam except among tribesmen to whom it is, good or bad, a rule of life, even if it makes them fanatics. With Moslems in India it is otherwise. Seventy years of Christian rule and contact with Christian missions has taken the edge off their faith, and long contact with Hindus has made them

## LEARNING ARABIC

at once comparatively tolerant (compared with Persians) and much more devout.'

'(L., Nov. 15) I have broken new ground this week and I write this from Deh Mullah on the Hindian River, 80 miles or so east of Ahwaz. I had 50 miles to cover over a perfectly flat, barren, waterless plain; after six or eight hours' marching I still seemed to be in the very centre of the plain, with a level horizon all round, and a cloudless sky—a strange feeling. In Southey's words

"And still at morning where we were at night  
And where we were at night at morning still  
The centre of that drear circumference,  
Progressive, yet no change."

The Persian mountains are the very skeleton of a country laid bare by aeons of rainfall: the level plains at the foot are the flesh washed off the bones in the form of fine silt. My caravan is the sole object on the landscape—not a sheep or even a jerboa is to be seen. I know of no such perfectly flat area of this extent anywhere.

'Last night I had an unpleasant experience—not new, but one that never loses its novelty. Down from the hills swept a rainstorm, the first of the season, wrecking the tent and soaking everything in it, including me. The soft ground would not hold the pegs: the rain put out the fire. We had to sit and shiver for hours in a cold wind. "Heaviness may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning"—by 8 o'clock the sky cleared, the sun beamed upon me, as also my cheerful servant Mirza Daud, who is a reliable and wholly honest factotum. He washed my and his clothes in the river, while I sat naked till they dried, and induced the local headman to get his wife to cook us a dish of lentils and rice meanwhile.

'Then back to Mohammerah, a weary ride over endless desert, enlivened only by an attractive young Arab who was ready to teach me some Arabic via Persian. He was such good company that I induced him to go the whole way to the Karun with me, feeding him and his horse, of course, and giving him a little present into the bargain. I must learn some Arabic in order to extend my surveys. The I.B. have

## ONCE MORE AT THE OILFIELDS

just sent me an Indian Surveyor: he knows no Arabic but can write a little in the script, and I must be able to go with him and introduce him to the leading Shaikhs.

‘When I finally reached the Consulate, after swimming with my horses across the Karun at Masjid in the absence of the ferry boat, leaving my caravan to come on later, I realized that I had not touched food for twenty-two hours. I was not hungry, simply faint, but the Consul, McDouall, soon revived me with coffee and later with a good Persian dinner.’

‘(L., Nov. 23) I am once more at the oilfields after an absence of a month, happy to be among my books and papers and to change my clothes, which I have worn continuously. I must start on my journeys again in a few days’ time but not with the same servants, horses, or men. They are tired out and as I feel quite fresh I am determined now to have two establishments and to use them alternately. It [travelling] will cost me more, but as the Government of India have raised my pay I can just afford it. On the last two occasions I have dragged men back to camp half dead, though they ride more and walk far less than I do and never climb. I am not a doctor and hate having sick men about.

‘On my way up here I travelled with a local magnate with whom I discussed *The Times* leader on the possible value of foreign intervention in Persia. His view was that Persia is rotten to the core: the alternative to European tutelage is a revolution, not yet in sight, which will not bring into being a Parliament but will replace the Qajar dynasty by another. But the Qajar have no rivals, and he was afraid that Russia would keep the present bad monarch on his historic but shaky throne. All Persian history, he said, has shown that monarchy can only be maintained by changes of dynasty. It makes me disinclined to stay here longer than I must, though great developments will follow the discovery of oil.’

‘(L., Nov. 1908) I see from *The Times* that Kaiser Wilhelm has declared that the average German dislikes us. That is not new to me, for I was in Germany during the Boer War learning the language and remember what they said and did then. The admission will check Utopian schemes of Anglo-German friendship sponsored by Peace Propagandists and Radicals.

## THE POT AND THE KETTLE

Why should anybody like us? Why should any nation "like" another? The only moral course for a nation's rulers is far-sighted self-interest.

'I see too that Bulgarian and Austrian kettles are being lectured on their cruelty to minorities—by the Russian pots (!) as well as by those newspapers and politicians who till recently were writing about Abdul the Damned and his atrocities. The Constitution will not improve the Government of Turkey or make atrocities rarer. Turks enjoy committing atrocities as much as English newspaper readers enjoy hearing about them. There is a good deal of Turkish blood in the Persian Qajar dynasty: the language of the Court is Turkish and many governors are of Turkish descent, hence occasional atrocities by Persian Governors—men sawn in two, bricked up alive, and so on. This is a Mongol-Turkish tradition and not Persian. Persians are more versatile, more dilettante, more intelligent but, at the moment, not good at governing or being governed.

'Some months ago I sent a number of coins I have collected in my travels to the Indian Museum at Calcutta: they were mostly found near Ahwaz. The report received to-day shows that they date from 180 B.C. onwards and are mainly Parthian—Mithridates II and Vologises. The same post brought news of the attempt on the life of the Lt.-Governor of Bengal and the glorification of executed criminals. I wonder, sometimes, whether the Turks might not teach us some lessons in the art of handling such disturbances, which continue and grow because the local authorities have insufficient powers. We want Order and Law—not LAW and Order. Law should be an instrument of justice, not an end in itself.

'The news makes me want to return to India: after all I put down my name at 17 to serve in India and that is still my ambition and the centre of most of my reading and thought. On the other hand, Reuter's Telegrams tell of disturbances in SW. Persia, between Isfahan and Shiraz, in which the prime movers are Kuhgalus, and it is just possible that even my limited experience of dealing with these people may be of use and my services in demand.'

'(L., Dec. 3) I write this in a ruined *Imamzadeh* or saint's

## FLOOD ON THE KARUN

tomb on the right bank of the Karun opposite Shushtar: in the room once occupied by a now absentee custodian. It has no door; there is a hole in the stone roof and a cold east wind whistles through. Before me lies the ruined bridge of Shapur, a fine structure, now useless because the Karun has torn a gap through the centre, doubtless because the bed of the river has been lowered in the course of centuries, as happened with London Bridge, so that the foundations cease to be level with the bed and become a sill. It has only collapsed in the last fifty years and it could be repaired without great cost, for Persians are fine builders and good stonemasons abound. Its place is taken by a primitive raft of inflated goatskins, handled by very skilful ferry-men in a current so strong that several passengers are drowned every spring but, as a passenger reminded me, never a boatman. The ferry service is the monopoly of the Governor: the dues charged are high—sufficient in five years, I reckon, to pay for the repair of the bridge.

‘As I write I hear the shouts of the boatmen, and the curses and prayers of the passengers, for the floods are lifting up their voice and a ten-knot current is running. The animals swim across: the goods—sugar, tea, piece goods—must be ferried, and losses are not covered by insurance: the average daily transit of goods averages 10 tons. A big caravan of camels has just arrived from Dizful where the best reeds for *Kalam*—reed pens—have been grown since the earliest times. They are sent off in long bundles enclosed in locally woven sacks.

‘The town of Shushtar is picturesque, dirty, compact. Every house has a *bad-gir*, a tall chimney to catch the breeze in summer and bring it down to the *sardab*, a deep cellar in the soft rock in which the inhabitants spend most of the heat of the day. The narrow streets are shady and there is fresh and dried fruit and vegetables in plenty.

‘I am physically fitter than ever. I can ride, or walk, or climb hills from dawn to dusk and write reports and work on my maps by the light of two candles till 11 p.m. or so; then sleep soundly—on the ground on a blanket laid double upon a carpet with two blankets or a quilt over me. I sleep lightly,

## DIZFUL

I wake up fresh, content with tea and barley bread at dawn, a light meal of dates and bread or perhaps a bit of cold meat at midday and a stomachful, when I am lucky, for dinner.'

'(L., Dec. 6) *Dizful*. I am the paying guest of the Consular Agent here. My lofty verandah overlooks the left bank of the Diz, a red flood of foaming water which has risen so high that it almost completely covers the water mills built in solid lime and stone centuries ago in échelon half-way across the stream. Below them is another broken bridge of great antiquity undercut by the stream like Shapur's bridge. Beyond the river lie the great mountains of Pusht-i-Kuh and Luristan, unmapped, almost unknown, for only a few European travellers have ever ventured into those inhospitable wastes. Even the lower ranges are snowcapped now: behind them rise tier after tier of limestone ranges, roughly parallel, separated by very deep valleys and united only, in general, by impassable gorges. Sixty years ago or so there was regular traffic from Dizful to Hamadan and Central Persia: now tribal feuds have made traffic impossible and goods for Central Persia must go either via the Bakhtiari road to Isfahan, or via Baghdad and Kermanshah. British and Indian goods and shipping are thus handicapped and Russian products assisted. On this road, in 1904, Capt. Lorimer and Maj. Douglas (Military Attaché, Tehran) were attacked, robbed, and injured. Lorimer is due to arrive here shortly with Ranking, after a visit to the Wali of Pusht-i-Kuh, an autonomous hereditary Lur chief. He is trying once more to arrange for caravan traffic northwards: if he succeeds Dizful will regain some of its former prosperity.

'My first call was upon a high religious dignitary, the Chief Mujtahid of Dizful, a very old white-bearded man of 80, bent and feeble of body but full of life. He did not shake my hand, for I am to him *nejis* "unclean", but he did not treat me either with veiled contempt or insincere compliments. He assumed a grandfatherly air, patted me on the back gently, and wished me success in opening up the caravan route. He added graciously to his grandson that if Persians were like me, read more and ate and drank less, learned English and tried to improve their own country, Persia would soon regain her place in the world. I have since discovered that he

## PERSIAN MANNERS

had heard much of me from relations in Ahwaz and Ram Hormuz.

‘He was rather like the best type of English priest, and when he began to speak of history and of early days in his own life he became really eloquent. The visit lasted nearly three hours.

‘When I left his house I found a young Persian chief of about my age waiting for me. I mounted my stallion—he was on a mare—and went off with him to lunch in a walled garden some miles south of the town. He was genial, wild, a good horseman and anxious to show what he could do. We raced each other over the rough roads—leaped one canal after another, firing at partridges and jackals as we rode. I could scarcely hold my excited beast, but he did not let me down and did me credit. Then came lunch—a sheep’s head and rice, simple and good, washed down with buttermilk. Then tea and some fruit including freshly picked oranges. A poet recited some martial verse and told some very Rabelaisian tales most amusingly. My host, who had married six months ago, lamented my bachelor existence and urged me, in presence of his henchmen, to take a temporary mate to relieve the intolerable tedium of long winter evenings. I could not, of course, take a wife about with me, but *sub pro tem.* he would find the right girl, and place a nice little house in a garden at my disposal. I do not think he was serious, but he felt hospitable and jolly and assured that as we were of the same age, in this department of life we were on common ground. Next day I took luncheon with his father, *en famille*—a much more solemn occasion: my host of yesterday was a model of propriety in the capacity of dutiful son. On these occasions I adopt, of course, Persian table manners: I have learned to sit on my heels, cross-legged: to eat with my right hand and not to drop food.

‘It is just as clean as our way. After all, one washes one’s own hands, but who knows who washes the spoons and forks, and how? Persians would regard the communal roller towel of hotels and clubs with aversion and do in fact regard the communal privy at 1d. a time with horror. They eat sheep’s eyes and count them a delicacy but would refuse an oyster,

#### A CONTINUOUS TRADITION OF CIVILIZATION

or a snail. They eat fish which is "high" but recoil with horror from "high" game. We like our game "high", but will not touch fish that is not fresh: but if they would only eat fresh fish they could seldom eat any at all. I find it quite as pleasant to taste as a ripe pheasant.

'More calls to-day, rather tedious, but useful for practice: formal compliments and conversational gambits are useful, as in England, in dealing with strangers. Though Persians are inclined to be contemptuous of foreigners and to regard Consuls with not wholly unjustified suspicion, they have very good manners among themselves: perhaps because they have, I suppose, a longer continuous tradition of civilization than any European race. Persia was a very old country in the days of Darius.'

'(L., Dec. 10) I am still reading Indian History and Archaeology. This extract from the official Gazetteer makes all subsequent events seem modern:

"All that is known of palaeolithic man in India . . . rude stone implements . . . reveals the existence of a race of men contemporary with animals now extinct. . . . The geological evidence in India . . . indicates the existence of a wide gap of untold centuries between the remains of palaeolithic and those of neolithic man."

Again

"The iron pillar of Chandragupta (A.D. 375) is a welded mass of pure iron, 24 feet long, weighing six tons, a triumph of the blacksmith's art which few modern foundries could emulate."

At that time the English were certainly centuries behind the Eastern nations in the arts of life. Persian Archaeology which I have not yet started on would probably teach the same lesson and over a longer period: everything that Persians make in the bazaar is good to look at as well as useful—brass—nickel—iron ware—carpets—cotton and woollen cloths—mule and horse harness—all has a distinctive touch which pleases the eye.

'I find town life irksome. As long as I am in a tent neither



## CATHEDRAL AND PARISH CHURCH

heat by day nor cold by night, nor being soaked to the skin does me any harm. But living in a house is bad for me and I have got my first cold in the head for many years, probably because I have been eating too much.

'You suggest that I should ask to return to India. I should like to do so but (1) I am well paid, and may get more soon. (2) Persia is usually regarded as a "dead end", but my experience in the last year has been exceptional and may be useful elsewhere. There is trouble in the air, with "constitutions" in Tehran and riots elsewhere: the oilfield is going ahead: Lorimer is going on long leave: Cox might regard me as deserting my post, and the only grounds I could give for my desire to go to India would be personal and private.'

'(L., Dec. 17) *The Times* is bread and meat to me. I like to know all about things in detail. I like its authoritative articles on Indian Tariff Reform, and double-column telegrams on Persia, the Near East and Germany.

'I thought well of the Dean's sermon. One passage gave rise to the reflection that the best motto for a school would be "To you the future". I suspect him of being rather overwhelmed by the ceremony of the Cathedral. At Mostyn House School, Clifton and Sandhurst the ideal was collective worship with a minimum of rites and ceremonies, which is not that of the Cathedral with its railed-off choir and high screen. I am not a reformer in this matter, but were I a parishioner without ties to the Cathedral I should go to the little Parish Church next door, if only to be free from the tyranny of the organist, but would go to the Cathedral for the sermon.

'I follow current legislation with interest. Are we not over-zealous law-makers? Is Education so valuable that police should be empowered to arrest bargees and gypsies without warrant and seize their children? Is an Act to prevent mothers from giving children beer "except for urgent reasons, sickness, &c." likely to help matters? What you are doing in Worcester in the way of Infant Welfare, without an Act, is far more valuable than what can be achieved by legislation.

'I am afraid that dead letter Acts will clutter up the Statute Book and bring Social legislation into disrepute. I believe in

## EXPERTS AND AMATEURS

expert administration and expert legislation: the amateur in both branches is supreme in England today. Amateur school boards, amateur County and Borough Councils, amateur M.P.s. When they have lost heart or interest they delegate powers to officials to put right by regulation what has been omitted in legislation. It is "slack" and wasteful.'

'(L., Dec. 29) Lorimer did not go to Dizful but direct to Ahwaz. The telegraph line was not working so the news came by post late one evening. I decided to do the journey in one day, so I sent a spare horse to Shushtar, and gave the groom a telegram for Ahwaz ordering a spare horse to Band-i-Qir, which is half-way. I left Dizful in cold moonlight and a north wind at four o'clock and reached the ferry at Shushtar—34 miles distant—at midday. I ate bread and dates as I waited for the ferry, mounted a fresh horse on the other side and rode to Band-i-Qir, some 30 odd miles, in five hours. Again a ferry and more dates, and a fresh horse which brought me, thoroughly tired and very cold, to the Consulate before ten o'clock. I drank a bottle of wine and went to bed, but not till I had given my horse a pound of sugar and three pounds of barley flour made into balls with butter. Over a hundred miles in one day is not bad going and it counts for merit with Persians and Arabs.

'The next day was spent entirely with Lorimer, whom it was a joy to see. He wanted me to spend Christmas with him if only to eat a few good meals, as he says I am getting quite gaunt. I should have gladly done so, but on Christmas Eve the chance came of going to Dizful, up the right bank of the Diz via Shush, with Shaikh Haidar of the Arab Al Kathir tribe—an important road not yet reported on or mapped having long been closed by Arab or Lur marauders. He was travelling light, and fast, so I put a blanket under my saddle for my mount, and one over my saddle for myself, took a rifle and belt of ammunition for appearance sake, as well as a revolver and dagger to show I was a gentleman-at-arms like him (only grooms and menials travel unarmed), and started off, after the usual delay with the ferry at Ahwaz.

'After five hours riding over the level desert we reached a cold unfordable torrent (the Shāūr) 6 feet deep, 20 feet broad.

### SHAIKH HAIDAR'S CAMP

The Arabs stripped and swam across, rifle and clothes in a bundle on their heads, returning to swim the horses. I gave them my clothes and rifle to take across and swam my own horse across, holding his mane, put on my clothes, saddled and started again.

'Just before sunset we reached Haidar's camp and were welcomed with a volley of shots and loud screams. The shots were only a welcome, the screams were those of alarmed women who thought that the camp was being attacked. As we got near the men and boys formed a line and approached us, shouting and dancing, rifles held aloft in one hand. They were fine specimens of manhood, many naked but for a short shirt, having thrown off their cloak for the dance. The firing ceased as we came near and there was a rush for Shaikh Haidar: the greybeards kissed him on both shoulders, the men of position kissed his hand, the lower orders his feet or the hem of his cloak. Women invoked blessings on his head. At the outskirts of the camp, on one side of the track, an old bull buffalo had been thrown, its feet roped and held by young men; on the other ten sheep lay kicking, their feet held by eager little bright-eyed boys. Over each stood a man with a knife poised. Before we reached the spot, at a given signal they cut deep into the animals' necks, so that the blood should spout across the track: the little boys cheered, the old bull groaned and coughed, a little boy jumped upon his flanks, shouting with joy "a sacrifice, a sacrifice!", while dogs ran up to lap the blood. Close by men were making a great fire in which to grill the liver and kidneys and heart before starting to boil the meat. Within half an hour I was drinking tea and eating a *Kabab*—bits of fresh meat grilled on a skewer. Two hours later we had a great meal of "red" rice and mutton, with the brains and tongue of the buffalo. The camp as a whole shared the rest.

'The scene in the long *diwan* or public tent was new to me, for I have as yet seen next to nothing of Arab ways. At the far end, across the tent, sat Shaikh Haidar, with me as his guest on his right hand and a priest on his left. The elders came in at one end of the tent, made their bow, murmured salutations and took their seats, "decently and in order"

## THE DIWAN

according to some recognized rule of seniority. When they were ready, first tea was served from a samovar or urn, each cup with a big lump of sugar: then coffee from a great copper coffee-pot with a long beak in which a wisp of coir from a palm tree was placed to intercept the dregs. Then the coffee-pot was put back on the charcoal fire between two stones on the earthen floor; fresh coffee was brought and roasted on an iron shovel, pounded in a brass mortar by a man whose black colour and fuzzy hair showed that he was the son or grandson of an imported African slave. The new coffee was put into the pot on top of the old dregs, and a new infusion prepared and handed round. The Shaikh praised it: the negro said it was a new consignment of "Mocha" coffee, freshly bought from so-and-so, who said it was from such-and-such a plantation. They are connoisseurs of coffee as we are of wine and know what areas produce the best, and in what years. The Shaikh gave the negro a silver piece: the negro placed it on his forehead, and over his heart, and then in a fold of his waist cloth. Conversation became general: then animated: then died down. I rose, saying I was tired: the Shaikh's son took me to a small tent, where, an hour or so later, he and his brother took their dinner with me, all eating with our hands, after careful ablutions, from a common tray. Then more coffee and a little talk. The youths retired and I, rolling myself in my blanket with my saddle as a pillow, went to sleep.

'We were up betimes next day and reached "Shushan the Palace" after eight hours leisurely riding: we were a small party, only eight. I was riding a mile or more from the main body with Shaikh Haidar's son, a youth of my own age, talking Persian and airing my scanty Arabic when, right ahead of us, on the edge of a tangle of willow trees, within a mile I suppose of the river—which is here very broad and shallow—I saw a lion. De Morgan, the French archaeologist, and Lorimer have often heard that there are a few left, but have never seen one. My companion wanted to shoot it—I dissuaded him. There are so few left and they do no manner of harm, feeding only on wild pig. It is a pity that the Persian Government do not create a sanctuary for them, seeing that

### SHAIKH HAIDAR'S SON

the lion is the national emblem of Persia. They were once very common all over SW. Persia from south of Shiraz to south of Kermanshah.

'The great mound which overlooks the palace of Artaxerxes is now crowned by a very fine castle in French mediaeval style made entirely of great bricks from buildings of immense age. It was built by Jacques de Morgan, the great French archaeologist, who is the *chef de mission* here. The Frenchmen had not yet returned and the castle was closed, so I slept in an Arab camp a few miles farther on with Shaikh Haidar and his son, who had become my inseparable companion on this voyage. We talked long and earnestly of horses and rifles, shotguns and the breeds of sheep and goats, buffaloes and camels and cattle, a department of life with an immense vocabulary, for each animal, in each year of life, and of either sex, has its own name, and sometimes a special name according to its colours. Nor did his interests stop here, e.g. he devoted the evening to the social and marital customs of Persians, Arabs, and Turks, as compared with ours. He took a wife three months ago, and described her physical charms to me, as a discreet foreigner in whom he could confide, with naïve enthusiasm that had nothing in it of indecency in his mind.'

'(Dec. 29) At last I am back at the oilfields, where I dined with Dr. Young, who is making an immense success of his hospital and is filled with holy enthusiasm for his profession. He is rapidly acquiring the dialect, and a reputation: he is little interested in European politics or home affairs but well informed upon local happenings. No trouble is too great for him: I wish there were more like him: he has got the power of growth which most of the engineers here seem to lack.

'I found awaiting me a letter from Cox asking me whether, if the Guard should go back to India, I wish to return with them or stay in SW. Persia. I replied that I wished to go back to India, on purely personal grounds, but that I should not apply to do so and would go anywhere and do anything required. I added, perhaps improperly, that I was sorry he had not found time to visit the oilfields in person and see things for himself.'

## IN RETROSPECT

Thus ended my first year in Persia: it was strenuous and happy: I must have covered some 3,000 miles, on foot and on horseback, and roughly mapped as many square miles of country. I had acquired some knowledge of Persian and a smattering of Arabic, and was gradually weaning myself from India and my Regiment. I foresaw—who could fail to do so?—that the discovery of oil would change the whole situation in course of time. I could not foresee that within six years we should be fighting in Mesopotamia, and relying upon the very Arab and Lur chiefs whose acquaintance I had been cultivating to maintain the supply of oil essential for the prosecution of the war.

I could not foresee that twenty years later aerial surveys would complete, in a few weeks, with perfect accuracy, surveys which had cost me so many months of toil and so many, many hundreds of thirsty hours spent in ascending the barren slopes of the forbidding limestone mountains. Nor did I imagine it possible that a score of geologists would be occupied for twenty or thirty years in the detailed study, by every art known to modern science, of the areas that I had hastily traversed. I was content to make my maps and submit my reports to a watchful Intelligence Branch whose chiefs were probably as little aware of what the future might hold as I was.

## CHAPTER III

1909

### *The discovery of oil at Masjid-i-Sulaiman: Visit of Sir William Willcocks: I become Acting Consul at Mohammerah*

I SPENT January at Ahwaz, as Assistant to Capt. Lorimer, the British Vice-Consul, who had been on tour for six months and was much in arrears with his accounts and other work. He, too, had collected a great mass of data for a Report on Pusht-i-Kuh and handed some of it over to me to set out in convenient form. He was a very good chief, widely read, a good soldier (formerly in The Guides), with an I.C.S. brother in the Political Department, who later became Resident at Bushire. We criticized and corrected each other's reports and maps, correlating our observations where they overlapped, pruning our adjectives, and modulating rather than moderating our respective personal opinions upon individual chiefs.

We both devoted much thought to the future development of the oilfields and exchanged views officially and privately with Major (later Sir Percy) Cox at Bushire. From information placed at our disposal by the Company's officials it seemed probable that the field would become a large producer. A pipe-line ending at a refinery on the coast or on the Shatt-al-Arab would be essential: we were confident that we could negotiate the necessary agreements with the Bakhtiari chiefs and the Shaikh of Mohammerah. There seemed little doubt, to our minds, that the requisite capital would be available. But would the highly organized oil interests of America, Holland, and Russia tolerate the development of a rival oilfield of such magnitude? Would they not seek to acquire

## SUNNIS AND SHIAHS

control? Was the Burma Oil Company sufficiently strong and far-seeing to act as foster parent to the expensive infant, who could not repay (in cash or in kind) the care lavished upon it for at least six years? These and other matters were much debated and occupied much space in my diaries.

I returned to the oilfields early in February, just in time to prevent what might have been a 'grave incident'.

'This is the month of *Muharram*, corresponding in Persia to our Lent and ending in the celebration of the death of the martyred Husain, patron saint of Persia and of all good Shiah. A Kurd, *not* a Shiah but a Sunni, accidentally shot a Shiah Persian, just outside my tent in which he at once took refuge. I myself took the wounded man to hospital where, thanks to Dr. Young's skill, he recovered, after the bullet had been extracted from his skull. The local Bakhtiari guards demanded the surrender of the Sunni, as a Persian subject. I refused, on the ground that they had no jurisdiction over Persians who were not Lurs and not customarily under the sway of the Bakhtiari Khans. I would hand him over to the Persian Governor-General but no one else.

'It was the first open clash that had occurred between my Indian guard and the Khans' men and much depended on it, for some of our best men were Sunnis from Tabriz and we have at least a hundred Kurds. The Khans' men of course wished to extract money from him and his friends. They blustered, threatening to take the man by force. I said I would shoot if they tried. They spread stories everywhere that Sunnis were murdering Shiah and being protected by me, that no Shiah's life was safe, &c. When the injured man (most fortunately) recovered he was the first to insist that it was an accident and that the Kurd was not to blame. The Kurds wanted to form a procession and come to thank me, but were dissuaded from thus trailing their coat.'

This incident set the seal of popular approval upon our claim to protect non-Bakhtiaris against ill treatment: the Persian Governor-General, to whom I wrote direct,



## LONGING FOR INDIA

also tacitly approved. The Khans said nothing, and the matter was settled amicably between the parties.

A fortnight later I was attacked, while surveying,

‘by a group of savages on whom I shall turn my back or, at least refuse to speak to if I meet them again! They rolled boulders on me from the sides of a steep ravine and shot at me, I think with intent to kill, and at short range. I took cover and shouted, as did the Persian who carried the plane table, that I should shoot to kill and that I shot straight. They finally decided to leave me alone. I suspect that they were put up to do this by the Bakhtiari guards at the camp.’

Capt. Lorimer went on leave in the spring, to my great regret.

‘The rare occasions when we meet are balm to my soul; we have so much in common. Now that he is *in exitu* I am *de facto* the Adviser to the Oil Company on local matters. A lot of awkward questions have arisen already and there are many more in prospect. Reynolds is old enough to be my father (his son was with me at Clifton) and it is not easy for me to advise him. He is a gentleman, well read, and of very good presence with much experience, but he has no Assistant to handle local questions and I am personally undertaking land acquisition, &c. and even arranging to rent buildings for him. I wish it were otherwise: the sellers will say they have been cheated, and the Company will think they have paid too much. (This will be true, but they *must* have the land and there are no compulsory powers available except through the Khans or the Governor-General—and an appeal to Caesar would be ruinously costly.)’

My hankering after India is, in retrospect, surprising.

‘(To my father) My sole unsatisfied longing is for India and my Regiment. I want to be inside a machine, not outside one, not a self-contained machine “on my own”. I would sooner be a rivet in a liner than a solitary little sailing boat, and I miss the companionship of the Mess, the shooting parties, and occasional big guest nights. This job is fascinating in many ways, but it is all work and no play: when in camp or on the

## CONSULATE AND OIL COMPANY

road one is 'on duty' even when asleep. I can only relax when in Ahwaz as Lorimer's guest. I am going on reading—I have borrowed half his library and he half mine; as for writing, it never ends, for all I see is new and unrecorded. Political troubles in Tehran show no sign of dying down and the Bakhtiari Khans, having become the arbiters of the destiny of Isfahan, are not likely to be any easier to deal with. Had the Ilkhani shown a little more determination he might by now have been Shah but family quarrels prevented him. Even a Consular Officer in his daily life, in the phrase of Horace

treads, as one on fire would tread,  
scarce hid by treacherous ashen crust.

He must have been thinking of the lava on the slopes above Naples.'

'(L., Mar. 1) The relations of the Consulate and the Oil Company's people grow daily more difficult. Reynolds, aged 57, is whole-heartedly set on his job, but has no staff to help him in his dealings with local authorities and "natives", whether on the fields, though there Dr. Young is very good, or in Ahwaz. I wish the directors would borrow or steal a man or two from the Imperial Bank of Persia, who know the country, the language and customs of all classes, the legal pitfalls, or some of them, and the way to deal with documents. We have hinted at this again and again but without result. Reynolds asks our advice: when it does not accord with his view he says, very intelligently—"I don't agree. I cannot do it that way myself— but beg *you* to do it *for me* on the lines that suit *you*"—and we become agents for him, not advisers. The position of a Company which is working under a Concession from one Government (Persian) but depends on the goodwill of a provincial administration (Arab and Bakhtiari) and the military and moral support of a third (British and Indian), with a head office in Glasgow, dealing with the Foreign Office (in London) and a Foreign Dept. (Simla) through local officers (in Persia) is not easy.'

'(L., Mar. 1909) It is good to see the spring return. The wheat and barley sown in autumn are sprouting: everywhere are flowers, tiny replicas of the English daisy and marigold,

## TURKEY

with almost no leaves. They bud, blossom, and go to seed all in three weeks. Garlic and anemones, in great clouds, colouring the desert and lighting up a whole ravine; narcissus, tulips, and crocuses, and a score of flowering shrubs, a-growing and a-blowing "born to blush unseen and waste their sweetness on the desert air". Here are "the cattle upon a thousand hills" of the Psalm, the fowls upon the mountain, and the wild beasts of the field. When rain comes it is as the Psalm (85) says—it brings water to the furrows and rain into the little valleys: the little hills rejoice, the folds are full of sleep, and the fields stand so thick with corn that they (i.e. the men in them) laugh and sing. Rain is life here to man and beast. It is a joy to travel, but I have a pack of trouble to carry: the political horizon is misty: no one cares to predict the probable course of events. I have to work out the salvation of the Oil Company, so far as my work on their behalf is concerned, in the dark. Lorimer gets home next week. I have not yet met the redoubtable Cox.

'My books gain in value to me according to the extent that they are read by my friends and relatives, so please read any book I ask for before you send it, and lend it to any member of the family likely to be interested. I lend a lot of books here, and lose some, but it is a small price to pay.'

'Persia is in low water politically and, were there any deep-seated popular desire for change, there would be a great explosion, but the scramble for the sweets of office is too blatant, and political movements in the towns smell of Tammany rather than of the Commune. Turkey is taking the same road and may get the disease worse, for whereas Persia is racially fairly united, geographically compact, and politically homogeneous, Turkey contains many explosive elements. The Arabs dislike the Turks; the Kurds are at heart set upon autonomy; the Armenians, full of intelligence and good fighters, as we know in N. Persia, are with the Constitutionalists and against the Monarchy. They are as incurably intriguers and plotters as Jews, and unlike Jews are brave men who will not stop short of violence, even at great risk to their own skins.'

'(L., Mar. 20) We are in a real dilemma. We have relations

## PROSPECTS OF MARRIAGE

with the Bakhtiaris and the Shaikh on the maintenance of which the smooth working of the Oil Company depends, and we have British and Indian commercial houses, who handle imports in competition with Russian goods. Our sea-borne goods cannot penetrate up country if the caravans are constantly robbed, as at present. Our policy is one of non-intervention, but what reply are we to give when our influential chiefs with whom we are in contractual relations appeal to us for advice as to whether they are to obey the Shah and his officials, or the Constitutional party which in some areas has the upper hand? They cannot obey both: the Customs receipts are earmarked for the service of foreign loans. If the Constitutional party seizes the Customs offices and proceeds, what if anything should we do?’

‘In one of your recent letters you say you hope I will marry “in due time”. I am bound by my undertaking not to marry till after three years’ service with the Political Department—which I expect to join in July. This means I may not marry till I am 28. If I can find my affinity I shall not hesitate to do so then: it will not hurt my professional prospects. Moreover, there are other things to live for than a Department, however great.

‘I am glad you have joined the National Service League: I became a paying member eighteen months ago. I am sure universal military service is a good thing in itself as well as necessary. The debates on India in the Lords were, as you say, “masterly”. Morley clearly has Minto under his thumb and constantly refers to the agreement that exists between them: but the Viceroy’s Council (and I suspect the India Council) are not equally complaisant. The party in India that wants to see the last of us will not be mollified by any reforms: it wants not to mend but to end the present form of Government. The slow process of growth and change has no attractions for such men.

‘It was a Liberal Government that was unwillingly dragged into intervention in Egypt. It looks to me as if this process will repeat itself before long in Persia, where from the outset we have, perhaps inevitably, seeing what a large part Parliament plays in our imagination at home, smiled upon and

## TENT-PEGGING

encouraged "Parliamentary" forms when desired by some Persians with motives more akin to those of Hampden (who wanted *not* to pay for the defence of his country) than of Burke.

· *'The Times* just received tells of Archie Gwatkin's death on the frontier, killed while leading a cavalry patrol in pursuit of raiders. He was brother of Fred, a very good friend of mine at Clifton, and with him in the same House. It will be a blow to his father Colonel Gwatkin and his mother: they live in Camberley and were most kind to me when I was at Sandhurst. I telegraphed condolences to relieve my own feelings. Three years ago another school friend, Macaulay, was killed in much the same way, but in cold blood.'

*'(L., Apr. 10)* I write on board a river steamer sped by melted snows down stream to Mohammerah, on my way to Bushire. I started late from camp after a tent-pegging and "Turk's head" show put up by my Indian cavalymen who showed themselves at least as good horsemen as the Bakhtiari and more adept at target practice with their rifles at 400 yards. I also competed and did fairly well with rifle, sword, and spear, as I have had plenty of time to practise. I rode 35 miles non-stop: intending to camp on the river under the stars. A sudden thunderstorm came on: cold wind and hail-stones of great size—painful to man and even more so to beasts: I could scarcely restrain my mount from bolting—on a road made dangerously slippery by mud. We shivered in the rain till dawn when my baggage arrived—the whole contents, consisting of my Sunday suit for use at Bushire and some books, soaked with muddy water, the mule having fallen into a deep hole when crossing the river. I put myself and my kit on a boat that was passing down stream after discharging a cargo of dried fish: it smelt abominably but I found some compensation in being followed by a great flight of swifts. Whenever a sail flapped or I struck at the deck with my riding-whip a swarm of flies arose. The swifts swooped down with open beaks, repeating the manœuvre tirelessly for an hour. Then they left us and went up stream: their place was at once taken by another flight.

*'At midnight a sudden gale struck us and we heeled over*

## SET-BACKS

and nearly went aground. "Tears and prayers were had recourse to but proved no manner of use" as Malcolm makes a British bo'sun say on the Euphrates, so we lowered sail, dropped anchor—a heavy stone with a hole in it for the rope—and hoped for the dawn, while pitiless rain beat upon us. With the dawn came bright sun—and coffee and good temper.

'The Government of India have now given me two Surveyors and a free hand as to how to use them, with no restrictions as to costs, partly I fancy because I have kept my own expenses down very rigidly in the past. Most officers in Persia travel with a dozen mules: I seldom have more than two, often none. I shall make no programme. Opportunities in this country appear—and disappear—suddenly: it is always "now or (probably) never".

'I heard yesterday from Cox: he wanted me as his Personal Assistant: the Government of India refused as I was too junior, and they were not prepared to create a precedent by lending me to him on my first appointment to the Department. Cox is good enough to say he is sorry, but he is not half as sorry as I am. To be his Personal Assistant would be valuable experience: it is the most important and responsible junior job in the Department, and I could have done it well. I can only hope, not very confidently, that it will not damage my career in the Department. It is the second knock I have had in a year, the first being when Ranking, a senior officer, was appointed over my head nominally to command the Guard but actually to understudy Lorimer. He is now acting for him, and on the roll of the Department. I am still waiting, and working. If I had "interest" in the Department Cox would have got his way. However, the truth is that I am so engrossed in the daily round of work that I soon forget such set-backs. I am content to work twelve hours a day in the Government vineyards for my penny.'

I see from my diary that during this month I devoted much time to repairing the gauges put up in 1903 by Major W. R. Morton, R.E., above and below the rapids at Ahwaz and that I summarized in graph form all available figures of high and low flood-levels. These

## LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES

apparently useless figures were of considerable importance twenty years or so later when irrigation projects in Iraq and the dredging of the bar below the mouth of the Karun in the main stream were under consideration. Some fifteen years later, in 1924, I was a witness of the worst flood on the Karun in living memory. The river rose above its banks, flooding the main bazar at Nasiri: it tore down part of the ruins of Shapur's bridge at Shushtar and the fort on the left bank. Mohammerah itself was saved from flood by the timely construction of earthen dams. The desert on either side of the Karun from near Band-i-qu to Mohammerah to a distance of nearly 50 miles was flooded, often to a depth of many feet. Sheep and cattle perished in great numbers: in some areas hundreds of camels were drowned. The loss of life was put at some 3,000 persons.

'(L., Apr. 28) I am much interested in Poor Law Reform, but it has come up at a bad time. There are more questions of first-class importance now pending than our present Parliamentary system, which I should like to see cleaned up, can possibly handle. The Liberals are pledged to push House and Town Planning, Welsh Disestablishment, Scottish and Irish Land Reform, Plural Voting, Land Valuation, Abolition of Lords Veto, Licensing Reform, and half a dozen other controversial questions in which broadly speaking they have my sympathy, like yours. What they should really do is to begin by reforming House of Commons procedure: then they might reasonably hope to get on with their job.

'The Conservatives on the other hand are pledged only to Tariff Reform. This is not a view borrowed from *The Times* but a personal opinion evolved in a Persian desert.

'I enjoy reading everything that Professor Browne of Cambridge writes about Persia. He is a visionary with a great mastery of facts, though I mistrust his interpretation. It is a pity he does not come out to see things for himself. Liberals seldom do that. No man has done so much for Persian literature as Browne. His standard is very high, his output great.

EDWARD GRANVILLE BROWNE

His two-volume *Literary History of Persia* is a masterpiece such as any country might envy. All British officials admire him, but few if any agree with his political prescriptions. He believes that a parliamentary régime on European lines can be grafted on to an oriental monarchy by a few high-minded visionaries, backed by an unscrupulous lot of office seekers with the armed support of tribesmen. *Non tali auxilio*. "Not such defenders, nor such aid the times require." His scheme ignores the hereditary aristocracy who carry great weight and can always command a following.'

'I did not go to Bushire after all as Maj. Cox came to Mohammerah in H.M.S. *Sphinx*, a dignified paddle-ship with a great history. He was most genial and encouraging. I am glad I did not have to face his wife with my soiled clothes and stained dinner jacket and white shirts, though I am told she is a great character and most kind to the younglings, as Hugh [my brother] calls junior officers.'

'(L., May 1909) Bushire was seized by the Nationalists last week. Their leader helped himself out of the Customs receipts. His followers announced that they would follow his example on a smaller scale. He invoked his own proclamation—they had come to restore order, promote justice, &c. They replied in effect that that may have been his idea but it was not theirs. They had not, of course, been paid. They are a wild lot and we shall probably have to land troops to prevent them from sacking the town which is full of British-owned goods.'

'(L., May 1909) I enjoyed S. T. Irwin's letter from Clifton and his commentary on the Emancipation of Women, viz. that it should be preceded by the emancipation of children whom he regards as standing in greater need of protection from moral pressure than from physical cruelty. He is incapable of the latter but in my recollection had more *indirect* influence on boys than almost any other master. His collected Addresses are a great joy.'

'I agree with Hugh and am against Otto Siepmann (language master at Clifton) as to the relative importance of knowing French and German well, or one of the two languages *very* well. I am no believer in lingual thoroughness. I have chosen to know something of 6 or 8 languages rather than



## INDIAN TROOPS FOR PERSIA

everything about one. I can now talk a little Arabic and feel as if I had acquired a new personality and a new philosophy in the process. There are few sensations more pleasing than the first steps into a new tongue: it opens many doors. I am pleased and flattered at the surprise of my local Arab friends when I begin to lisp, fairly accurately, in their dialect, though I fear I shall never be a really good linguist, for I cannot spare the time to concentrate upon the reading and writing.'

'(To my brother *Stewart*) I rode about 120 miles—Mohammerah to Shushtar in 30 hours—three days ago on three horses sent in advance. This left me 8 hours or so for eating and sleeping but none for walking, of which I get little in the plains but plenty in the hills. My object was to see the Governor-General and secure his immediate assent to certain measures in the interests of the Oil Company. The fact that I rode almost non-stop to him was a compliment and produced the desired effect. I got his written order and, after a good dinner, returned the next day to Ahwaz (64 miles).

'I have just lost good company—two Naval Officers on their way to Isfahan: they could neither ride nor speak Persian and were deeply addicted to English food and drink. I fed them for two days on Persian food and drink and converted them, provided them with a good cook and some very good mules, and hoped for the best. I do not doubt that they will enjoy themselves and be sensible: they see a good deal of the Gulf Arabs and get on very well with them in the Persian Gulf.'

'(L., *May 1909*) We shall I think steer clear of serious trouble in this region. My own journeys and those of the Company's staff, and the Company's already famous hospital, have done much to reconcile local people to the presence of infidels in their midst. We may have to send more troops, but I hope they will be Indian troops who can live on the country and in a manner intelligible to Persians. The British soldier, bless him, must have a standard ration, and his requirements of fuel and meat &c. would be unobtainable. I have complete faith in my Indian cavalymen.

'I am on my way to Mohammerah for a preliminary survey of land needed on Abadan Island by the Oil Company for a

## SIR PERCY COX

refinery. They want a square mile of desert. I have myself travelled the probable route of the pipe-line and provided them with maps which have proved very valuable. I had hoped to be out of this blasted country by the end of the spring but see no chance now, owing to widespread disturbances. Things are worse in Mesopotamia where navigation on the Tigris has been closed for six weeks, also by "constitutional disorders". There is great misery among the poorest classes who bear the brunt of all the trouble. They know well that they can hope nothing from any change of government. Like Pope in his "Essay on Man", to them "whatever is, is best". A bad ruler who knows them is better than a fairly good ruler who does not: a tribal tyrant who can be deposed or killed as a last resort is preferable to a hydra-headed hierarchy of officials which can never die and is the most powerful of vested interests with a strong hereditary blend.'

In May 1909 Cox came up in the R.I.M.S. *Lawrence* to negotiate the agreements with the Shaikh of Mohammerah on behalf of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, as it had now become. I was summoned from Masjid-i-Sulaiman to assist him and spent a full week as his Cipher Clerk and Secretary-Typist. I was, of course, very closely cross-examined by him on every phase of the Company's activities, so far as known to me, and upon what I had seen and done in Arabistan and the Bakhtiari country. He had travelled much in unknown parts of Arabia himself and had done some surveying, so he could criticize with knowledge and speak with authority. He knew much of birds and was a close observer of wild animal and plant life. His Arabic was excellent: his bearing dignified. He exercised from the outset great influence on the Shaikh of Mohammerah, but was careful not to press him unduly. His patience was unbounded, his temper unaffected by the great heat. It was my first experience of this kind of negotiation, and of the manner in which high British officials did business. Cox was content to sit like the Shaikh on

#### NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SHAIKH

cushions on the floor: with his devoted Oriental Secretary, Mirza Muhamad (later Khan Bahadur and C.I.E.) by his side. He attached great importance to devising a form of words which should not give rise to disputes and invariably drafted a clause in Persian or Arabic, and discussed it in that form. Only when it had been finally agreed to in the vernacular did he essay a translation into English. His ideal was that the Persian text should prevail, being that of the weaker party.

The negotiations were prolonged for three or four days: for the Shaikh it was a momentous occasion. He was called upon actively to assist in the establishment within his bailiwick of a company which, as he foresaw, would eventually overshadow all other commercial and other interests and would inevitably cause the Persian Government to seek to extend their administration (hitherto delegated to him) to every part of Arabistan—a country as different from Persia as is Spain from Germany. As an Arab he hated and feared such a prospect as did his people. Could he rely upon us to protect him? Without a guarantee that we would assist him to the utmost of our power in maintaining his hereditary and customary rights and his property in Persia it would be suicidal for him to meet our wishes. The Home Government authorized Cox to give such assurances, and to extend them to his heirs and successors. The Shaikh thereupon gave the Company full way-leave for the pipe-line and sold them the land they required, on the understanding that it would revert to him when the concession expired.

In these negotiations I played little more than a secretarial part, but I had made a plane table survey of the northern end of the Island of Abadan on which the refinery now stands, and I had taken soundings along the bank, and it was upon my maps that the Company made its decision and they and the Shaikh jointly asked

#### JAZIRAT-AL-KHIDHR

me to delimit the area they acquired. They would have done better to take a strip right across the island with a frontage instead of a mere right of access to the Bahmeshir river, but, far-seeing as they were, they thought a square mile would suffice. Before many years had elapsed they were compelled to double the area of the refinery.

The island was at that time seldom known locally as Abadan, but as Jazirat-al-Khidhr—Khidhr's Island, from the tomb of a very famous saint behind the strip of date groves which line the right bank of the Bahmeshir.

Khidhr stands high in the hagiology of Islam. He is recorded in the Quran as a companion of Moses and is said, like Elijah, to have been 'translated'—taken up whilst still alive and to be living in a spiritual sense still.

The shrine marks the site of a miracle. A boatman was asked by Hazrat Khidhr to take him across the Bahmeshir. The boatman refused: whereupon Khidhr walked away from the bank, to the spot on which his shrine now stands, followed by the *mahaila* (barge) in which he should have been ferried across the river. Here Hazrat Khidhr disappeared. The *mahaila* remained till it decayed, but the anchor may still be seen, embedded in the dome of the shrine which is a favourite place of resort for those who wish to make a vow and to pray. The guardian of the tomb who told me this said that he was the sixth of his line from father to son who had held the post. The tomb, whitewashed and in good repair, has a beauty of its own: of its antiquity there is no doubt: it was probably built when the Karun was not connected with the Shatt-al-Arab except by the Haffar canal—originally dug as a boat channel and enlarged in the fourteenth or fifteenth century by successive floods until, as now, it is the main exit for the turbid waters of the Karun.

The negotiations having been brought to a successful

### CLIFTON COLLEGE CHAPEL

conclusion, Major Cox returned to Bushire and I to Masjid-i-Sulaiman

‘with renewed good spirits and more plans for work—thanks to contact with him. It was the first time I had met him though we have been in correspondence for 18 months. I was relieved to find him in sympathy with my general ideas and heartily in favour of my I.B. work which he wants me to extend yet further. He thinks it possible that disorders in Persia may spread to these parts: if they led to temporary intervention, if only to prevent the collapse of the Oil Company, such reports would be vital. He thought that the Indian Guard would remain till July, so I must face another summer in tents—though he wants me to travel and survey just as long as I can stand it.’

‘I have studied, and dislike much of the new design for the extension of Clifton College Chapel.’

‘Frescoes are seldom successful in English churches: they are alien to our “Low Church” services. The choir should be in the middle as at present and not railed off in the Chancel. They are part of, not apart from, the School. The unit of worship is boys and masters: ladies and visitors should be in a gallery or excluded. I do not want the School Chapel to become a church: there is a difference to my mind though I cannot explain it. But Henry Newbolt understands, as his poem, beginning “This is the Chapel” shows.’

‘It is a pity that our Diplomats in Tehran do not or cannot come south and see things and talk them over with Cox and his officers. There is bound to be some difference of outlook, but they will never realize how hopeless is the prospect of a parliamentary régime in Persia till they get in personal touch with the south and away from the charming French-speaking frock-coated grandees who swarm in Tehran but never stay in S. Persia— if they ever visit it—for more than a few months.’

‘I see in *The Times* of April 28 that the P.M.G. will stop postal deliveries on Sunday in any district which will consent to it. What a chance for the anti-Sunday workers to unite: who wants letters on Sunday if he has had them 6 days a week?’

## IRRIGATION IN MESOPOTAMIA

'I called on the Shaikh this afternoon on a minor matter. It was an unofficial visit: in the public room. In the courtyard, watching us, sat thirty or more Arabs. In one corner was the Governor-General, Haḡī Saif-ud-Dauleh, father-in-law of the Shaikh, a distinguished looking old Persian, engaged in saying his prayers: in another the Persian Foreign Office Agent was paring his toenails. I began by translating Reuters. The Governor turned from his prayers, the Karguzar from his toe-nails: the coffee-man stopped making coffee. When I had finished and began to talk of business they became preoccupied as before. Such is an official visit.'

'(*L.*, May 16) A new star has appeared on my horizon—Sir William Willcocks, the great engineer from Egypt who is now investigating irrigation possibilities in Mesopotamia. I took him from Mohammerah to Ahwaz, showed him all our files and reports on the subject, which greatly impressed him. I had been over almost every square inch of the whole area and could answer most of his questions. He is sixty, but immensely active and an enthusiast of the first rank, contemptuous of and indifferent to "political" obstacles to the noble ideals of producing wheat and cotton, linseed and barley by marrying these grand rivers to those potentially fertile plains. He swears that the soil of Arabistan is twice as good as that of Mesopotamia and far less likely to become waterlogged as the levels are so good. Every prospect pleased him, but I had to confess that man was vile—the Persian Government would neither do the job itself nor allow others to do it. I fear he did not like my cautious and dispassionate statement of the obstacles to be encountered. But it was a joy and a privilege to travel with him, and he was wonderfully well informed on all matters relating to Arabia and Egypt and the Old Testament.'

'(*L.*, June 10) Spurred by Sir William Willcocks I have managed to visit the Karkhah River, 20 miles west of Ahwaz. No European has been there for fifty years or so: the only map is yet older. It was not an easy journey. My factotum was ill, as also my head groom: the heat greater than I have ever known it (125° in the shade in Ahwaz—probably 130° in the desert and at least 160° in the sun). I travelled with

## THE LLOYD GEORGE BUDGET

some Arabs by night, carrying three days' food for us all, very hard tack, and spent the morning and evening in the river, wading and swimming to study the old dams, and making rough maps. It is the finest site for a dam I have ever seen. It has of course been used in the long-distant past and was unsuccessfully repaired some fifty years ago. Now a great vested interest has grown up in the marshes in which the river wastes itself. A little rice, a little maize—and thousands of miles of reed-beds are all that the river serves: it might water 50,000 acres of wheat and still leave plenty for rice fields.'

'I do not like Lloyd George's budget. It is ill suited to peace time. It will not help agriculture, which is our Achilles heel. It will not increase production, which is wealth. Every Government to-day can get kudos by spending money but not by any long-term policy for increasing the production of wealth. The policy of redistributing it by means of taxation is oriental in its simplicity: but it does not make for increased prosperity over a long period.'

'I have just finished Queen Victoria's letters. I read them under the shelter of a rock on the Karkhah. My veneration for her memory is, if possible, increased by reading them. I am proud to remember that I was one of the Cadet Corps Guard of Honour when she opened a Nursing Home at Clifton in 1899 or 1900. The letters bear reading again and again as a political guide. Her handling of Indian questions is particularly good and during the Mutiny she never lost her head or spoke or wrote wildly. There are few better things in English historical literature than the *Punch* cartoons, in which I revelled in the holidays on the library floor at Rochdale, in their treatment of the Mutiny or political events in Europe during her reign.'

'(L., June 15) The mail brought me congenial society; two men (aged 35 and 27 respectively) who will act as Managers at Mohammerah for the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. Both are gentlemen. One has much, the other a little, experience of business in India and England, but none in Persia. They will soon get more than they bargain for. The elder is J. B. Lloyd, the younger C. A. Walpole. They are on virgin soil

#### ACTING CONSUL AT MOHAMMERAH

here, with new offices to lease or build, new Persian and Indian clerks to recruit, and a wholly new type of work to which they and I and everyone else are strangers.'

'(L., June 16) My movements are as uncertain as ever. I may return to India; meanwhile surveys occupy all my energy. I have just spent three days in a howling desert visiting my sturdy Indian surveyors, and checking their work. They have settled down very well and have made friends with Arabs and Persians. In fact I believe that both have acquired (quite legally) temporary wives. They had no notice of my arrival—and I can explain in no other way the presence of a woman in their tent. One was 20 miles distant from the other, but they seem to have reached similar conclusions. I made no comment and pretended not to have seen anything. I just "hoped that they were comfortable". "Thanks to your honour, we are comfortable." "No", I said, "*not* thanks to me." The ghost of a smile fluttered over their faces.'

'(L., June 25) I was 60 miles away from Mohammerah near Fallahiyah, when I received a telegram from Tehran by runner directing me to go to Mohammerah and take over temporarily as Acting Consul on the transfer to Kermanshah of the present Consul.'

'The change is far-reaching, for Kermanshah will in future be staffed by the British Consular Service and Mohammerah will be under the Foreign Department. From the climatic point of view this is a score for the F.O., for Kermanshah is a delightfully cool place. From the administrative aspect the change will bring the Consuls at Kermanshah and Mohammerah in closer touch with their respective superior officers, for it has long been clear that Arabistan should be treated as a whole and not subject as at present to divided authority; the Vice Consul at Ahwaz is under Bushire and India, but nominally subordinate to Mohammerah. From the judicial point of view Abadan and the Oil Company will come under the Persian Order in Council which has recently been revised and not under the Persian Order in Council of 1889 which would in an emergency be quite unworkable.

'From my own point of view this is promotion, however temporary, and is financially better than the post of Personal



## RED TAPE AND WHITE

or Second Assistant to the Political Resident (Maj. Cox). The Foreign Department refused to let me go there three months ago because I was raw, untrained and junior, now it allows me to be made Acting Consul! I certainly owe this change to Cox whom I first met only this month; for not a soul in the Legation at Tehran or the Foreign Department in Simla has ever set eyes on me.'

I spent the next fortnight in taking over the Consulate. It was not an easy task. The incumbent, Mr. McDouall, was the first Consular officer to be appointed to Mohammerah in 1891: it was his first Consular post and he hoped, and indeed assumed, that it would be his last. Old, easy-going, rather deaf, with an Indian clerk who could not type, and copied letters in an immense round-hand, he had kept few records and written few letters. He followed the old F.O. system of keeping all letters in bundles, folded twice and docketed on the back. Each bundle was tied with red tape and had its own pigeon-hole: when it grew too bulky for the hole (3 in.  $\times$  3 in.) it was wrapped in brown paper, tied with white tape, and 'shelved', i.e. placed out of easy reach on a shelf running just below the ceiling. McDouall though married to a Moslem was a devout Protestant, not a great scholar, but with a great fund of oral information. He had suffered himself, or been allowed, to deteriorate both physically and mentally, but he was much respected and not without influence locally.

'(L., June 28) At 2 a.m. this morning I received an urgent wire from Bushire ordering me to report there for orders and to discuss various questions arising from the transfer of Mohammerah to the Foreign Department in India. I write this on the mail steamer on my way back. The journey there was twelve hours by sea: followed by an hour or so over choppy shallows from the outer anchorage at Bushire in a steam launch, ending with a six mile drive following the long axis of the rather barren island to Sabzabad. I met some of the

## THE MOHAMMERAH CONSULATE

British colony—consisting of men of the Indo-European Telegraph Department, agents of British firms and a British Vice Consul and Maj. Cox's Deputy. The foreign colony is even smaller—a Belgian Director of Customs, a Russian and a German Consul. No Club, what social life there is centres round the Residency and Mrs. Cox, a stately person but the quintessence of kindness, who, as Claudian said of the Roman Empire

like a mother, rather than an emperor,  
embraces subject peoples and gives them  
a common name.

She treated me like a mother and clearly spares no pains to make life tolerable for all Europeans in the social sphere. It was delightful to spend even forty-eight hours in a civilized environment after eighteen months in camp. On the day I arrived it was announced that Cox, already C.I.E., had been gazetted C.S.I. I was told that I should be six months at Mohammerah, after which I should have to make way for a senior officer: my pay will be raised to what is, for a frugal bachelor, a liberal figure. I spent many hours preparing a despatch as carefully as a sermon and about as long, for it took twenty minutes to read, setting forth my idea of what the Mohammerah Consulate requires in view of the growth of the Oil Company. Cox went over it carefully before "receiving" it but altered little.'

'(L., July 30) I have spent a fortnight taking over an establishment that has been under the mild and leisurely sway of my aged predecessor (for, though only 53, he is old for his years) for twenty years during which he has thrown away nothing and arranged nothing. To him the move is a trial; to his family, born and bred here, it is a tragedy, in which I figure as the villain and the supplanter. I have done all I could to make things easy for him and have taken over all his broken-down chattels at his own figure—often almost as much as the cost of the new things which I shall have to order. His departure, with white hair over bent shoulders, was pathetic; his family and his other local friends wailing aloud. However, this is now behind me and I am deep in

‘ALLOWED THE INITIATIVE’

negotiating agreements for the Anglo-Persian Oil Company with local landowners and local authorities, local tribes and the agents of the Central Government. A permanent settlement is beyond our reach; everything is as provisional as the Shah's rule itself; the most that can be hoped for is a *modus vivendi*.’

‘I am bound to say that I have no complaint as to red tape or carping criticism from Simla, Tehran or Whitehall: I am allowed the initiative and what advice I get—and it is little—is helpful. I do not like the system under which the A.P.O.C. (as I shall in future call the Anglo-Persian Oil Company) is managed locally by an *ad hoc* commercial firm which also does general business, and I have made this clear to Government. It seems to work all right in India, but it creates divergent interests, and there is not and never will be enough commercial business to keep three or four firms going. The German firm of Wonchhaus, our principal rival, does better, for its principal, Wonchhaus himself, is on the spot.’

‘(L., Aug. 28) I enjoyed every word of your letter from Clifton: I wish I could hear again and take part in the Chapel Service and sing familiar Psalms and Hymns. The Chapel remains my Mecca.

‘I have now an English surveyor at work on the Karkhah Irrigation scheme, in which the Government is mildly interested. If the Persian Government and the Shaikh would agree it would not be difficult to build the dam—there is an ideal site—and irrigate 50,000 acres, but as there is no immediate profit for anybody I fear that like the Shushtar and Dizful bridges and the Ahwaz dam nothing will be done.

‘I am now a civilized and respectable householder dressing most evenings “for dinner”, blessed with a decent cook who is kept up to the mark by a succession of guests. I have punkahs (hand-pulled fans suspended from the ceiling) for my guests but not for myself as they disarrange papers and I have learned to do without them. Moreover (this sounds silly but is true) I cannot help wondering whether the Arab boy or dotard who pulls the string is not tired: the very thought of his monotonous occupation makes *me* tired. This week's mail brought me Auberon Herbert's magnificent but

## KUT NAHR HASHIM

visionary *Individualist Creed* and Havell's book on Indian painting.'

'I have started Morning Service in the Consulate on Sunday, a mixed gathering of British, Armenian and Portuguese, with one American (female) missionary who lives near by in two rooms and is rather a thorn in my side as she is anxious to convert me to American fundamentalism, which has no resemblance to that of the Catholic Church, being based not on faith but upon very bad arguments.'

'(L., Sept. 22) I have spent a week exploring the old mouths of the Karun which enter the Khor Musa north of the Shatt-al-Arab bar. They are shown on no map or chart: they have never been seen by any European since the 18th century when some Captains in the service of the East India Company seem to have had some knowledge of them. The heat of the salt-impregnated mud was so great that the Arabs with me found it unbearable in the heat of the day. One heap of bricks at a junction of the creeks was called *Kut el Farangi*—the European's fort; another mound was known as *Qabr-i-* (The Tomb of) *Mister Zubaid*. I can find no record bearing on these names. It was a scene of complete desolation—gulls, fish and mud tortoises the only living things. Mirage in every direction. It was an exhausting trip but worth while.'

A few days later I made another trip to Kut Nahr Hashim on the Karkhah with a British surveyor, Storrs—20 miles by night on horseback from near Ahwaz, followed by survey work from dawn to dusk for several days. Four and a half years later I was conducting the 12th Division under General Gorringe across this tract of country by night, preparatory to crossing the Karkhah and, in pursuit of the retreating Turks, advancing on Amara.

'We had twenty guards with us and a score of chain men and instrument carriers. Orthodox surveyors would have laughed to see me swimming from rock to rock with a line round my neck, with which I would haul a tape-measure or a chain, held at the other end by Storrs. He was a quick

## ENGLISHMEN AND PERSIANS

worker and familiar with irrigation projects and within ten days we had a good set of rough drawings which I am sending to Simla for reproduction. The local tribesmen (Beni Turuf) brought some great carp, speared in the narrow channels through the marsh, and very good eating. We could have shot some wild pig had we been able to eat them, but in a Moslem country this would be folly. I bagged some blue rock pigeons, quail and black partridge, so we had something better than usual for dinner. I brought enough coffee beans to keep all the Arab guards and chain men supplied. They roasted and ground them in a mortar and provided us with all we wanted. It costs little to do this and coffee is to them what beer is to British soldiers and rum to Sikhs.'

'(L., Oct. 1) I have spent a fortnight upon Oil Company business, mediating between Englishmen who cannot always say what they mean and Persians who do not always mean what they say. The English idea of an agreement is a document in English which will stand attack by lawyers in a Court of Justice: the Persian idea is a declaration of general intentions on both sides, with a substantial sum in cash, annually or in a lump sum. The Principals in London foresee "legal" difficulties, but there is no Court of Law in Persia in which any of these agreements could be tested. All depends on friendly relations between the parties, based upon the expectation of future advantage by both sides, on the influence of Britain in Tehran, which is never as strong as we should like, and in the Persian Gulf, where we are living, largely on the reputation and policy of the past.'

'(L., Oct. 10) My immediate future is as doubtful as ever. I am not yet appointed to the Political Department, though I am holding a senior post and am given the fullest initiative although I am new and untried. I am not greatly set on staying: in six months or so I shall have got things going on new lines and shall have cleared up the Consulate. There is going to be a local political crisis in the next few days; I shall have to deal with it as best I can on my own responsibility. The telegraph line, which is unreliable at the best of times, has been cut in anticipation by one party or the other. The Imperial Bank of Persia are opening a branch here; I am

trying to find a decent house for the manager and his wife.

'The date harvest is drawing to a close; my mind is full of memorable sights and sounds, so different from those of the Bakhtiari foothills, though they have in retrospect their own wild beauty. A score or more of Arab *baghalas* and dhows have come up the river to load. The first-named, built on the Oman coast, have high poops in the tradition of sixteenth-century British sailing-ships. The latter are open boats but very seaworthy. The crews are Zanzibari, Somali or Arab. As they row up the river in heavy jolly-boats they sing their traditional shanties; the crew rest on their oars between each long stroke as the steersman in a high-pitched voice sings a line, with a note of patient endurance and pathos. Then they pull together, with a deep-voiced shout that comes over the water like the sound of a bell. Some of them are of British Registry and the Captains deposit their papers with me: fine-looking men, their faces seared by half a century of sun and wind. Sometimes they bring a cargo of scaffold poles (*balli*) from Zanzibar which they sell here. Sometimes also mats. Their ballast is great boulders of limestone; these too they can sometimes sell locally to the lime kilns. I have to enlarge the Consulate and bought two cargoes to be burned for lime for the lower courses of brickwork: the wall plaster will be gypsum (plaster of Paris) from Shushtar.

'But this is a digression. Just below the mouth of the Karun lies a great four-master on its annual visit from Zanzibar; it is 60 years old and must soon be broken up. The tides are low, the river smooth, the moon nearly full, the date groves full of families who have come from the desert to pick and pack the dates, taking payment mostly in kind. The stacking and collection, classification and packing of dates is a study in itself: I am trying to collect some reliable facts for inclusion in a monograph. There is nothing in print on the subject except one book by Popenhoe, an American who has made a success of dates in California. Down the river in the moonlight pass *bellams*—flat-bottomed canoes; some carry a light, from a few come the high notes of a dancing-girl singing to a guitar or banjo the latest ditty from Aleppo

## THE DATE HARVEST

or Damascus, her swains responding now and then with a raucous chorus. They are just what one can hear at the Gaiety or the Empire any night, but at a distance, under the moon by night in Arabic, they sound romantic.

'In the middle of the stream, drifting very slowly, come barges, laden with dates for shipment to Europe by a 6,000-ton British steamer anchored in the main channel. They are skilfully brought alongside, a rope is thrown and caught; a few minutes later the cranes begin to rattle and one hears shouts of *Arrea* (up) and *Abaiiss* (down)—corruptions of the Spanish-Portuguese (*arriba* = forward, and *abajo* = downwards)—a relic of the days when the Portuguese were dominant in these waters and ruled at Hormuz till we helped the Persians to oust them. The second or third officer and a Persian or Arab tally-clerk are checking cargoes till midnight; a Customs watcher is asleep in the corner, drawing double pay for night work. But for this the Customs would probably stop work at dusk.

'A little lower down Arabs in canoes are spreading their fishing-nets right across the stream; they may, or may not, carry a light: if they see a cargo steamer coming towards them they will try to get their nets in and the cargo steamer will avoid them if she can. But tragedies occur now and then, and the Consulate has to record sad tales and seek to obtain satisfaction—not often with success.

'At last, towards midnight, the songs in the river die down, the fires in the date groves grow dim, the cranes cease to rattle; out of the silence come only the pleasant warm smells of the date groves and the marshes, and the yelp of jackals answering each other.

'But I have forgotten one more sound as familiar here as in rural England—cock-crow. It was said that in the great days of Harun-al-Rashid the crowing of a cock at Fao when the full moon rose was taken up from hamlet to hamlet till it reached Baghdad by daybreak. Reckoning  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile per cock this means some 2,000 cocks would be relayed in this choral Marathon—250 per hour for 8 hours, say 4 per minute. Quick work, but not impossible.'

'(L., Oct. 16) If the Nonconformists and High Churchmen

would visit a Hindu or Moslem country they might be cured of their passion for discovering and formulating differences. The warring sects have perpetuated in India "our unhappy divisions", to quote the Prayer. Officers herd the British soldiers into groups according to their official "religions" and lead them into their respective houses of worship, though, excluding, perhaps, Catholics, Englishmen serving the Crown should be able to devise a common form of worship which ignores the old credal banners on the ecclesiastical wall for which clerics and other men once fought but fight no longer. Perhaps one day Australia or Canada or New Zealand will discover a better way.'

'(L., Oct. 16) A new Governor reached Shushtar and I rode 85 miles in one day, as before, to make his acquaintance and to pay him a compliment at the same time. He has been to Europe three times with the Shah and knows something of European politics. The London police, Balfour, and Chamberlain, are his idols. The former have no competitors abroad, the last-named none in Britain, for in his own words (translated) those now in power were not worth a dam (this is not a swear-word but an Anglo-Indian expression: *dam* = a very small copper coin).

'The weather was glorious, a clear sky, transparent air—freshly fallen snow visible on the highest peaks 100 miles to the north. Like so many Persians he was a great traveller and a lover of scenery. We dined in the open to enjoy the moon and the stars and made great friends. Not till next morning did we talk business; he was helpful and forthcoming and finally insisted on giving me one of his own horses for the first 28 miles, sending mine back in advance of my departure. He arranged a sumptuous lunch at 11 o'clock, eaten European fashion with knife and fork, and deputed two of his men to go the whole 28 miles. This cost me something, for custom requires the recipients of such compliments to pay well for them. But they were rendered by the two well-dressed retainers with such an air and with such courtesy that I really felt I had my money's worth in flattery. I did the 66 miles back to Ahwaz in eight hours, changing my horses once. On arrival at Mohamunerah I sent him half a dozen of



## GUESTS

my best books ornamented with my book-plate, as an unconventional offering.'

'(L., Nov. 18) The seeds have come and are doing well; almost every English flower or vegetable grows well here for a time, and I hope I am setting a new fashion. My Arab gardener is most solicitous. I have promised him the use (and sale) of seeds which are not wanted in the Consulate garden which he can produce from yours.

'My guests this month include

(1) the British Consul and Political Agent at Muscat who is obviously courting the elder daughter of the Consul at Basrah;

(2) the Superintendent of Indian Post Offices in the Persian Gulf from Karachi, a very interesting man;

(3) J. G. Lorimer, C.I.E., I.C.S., brother of my friend Capt. Lorimer, on his way to Baghdad as Political Resident and Consul-General, a very fine man, as much a soldier as a civilian, with a most pleasant wife. I thoroughly enjoyed their visit;

(4) the Basrah Agent of the British India Steam Navigation Company, well informed on all local matters;

(5) E. H. Keymer, Persian Gulf Chaplain, from Karachi, on his 6-monthly visit. He held service one Sunday in the Consulate. My first Communion for nearly two years;

(6) E. B. Soane, a most remarkable man who has been living in Kurdistan disguised as a Persian, and has at least one Persian wife! He was dismissed from the Imperial Bank of Persia, who do not hold with mixed marriage. I want to get him taken on by the Anglo-Persian who badly need someone like him. He is penniless, but must await the arrival of a Director of the A.P.O.C. agents who alone can take him on to their books as an employee. So I have asked him to stay with me and write a full account of all he knows of Kurdistan, for the information of Government, and he has agreed.'

'I had a Consular Court case this week with the parties and witnesses speaking French, Persian, Hindustani and Arabic but unable to understand each other. I had to translate each bit of evidence and each document three times, and finally record a summary in English. I was the only person in a

## TRAINING FOR A POLITICAL OFFICER

hurry and the case would be going on now had I not, after three days, threatened to refuse to adjudicate, on technical grounds, if they could not agree to settle "out of Court". This they did and then invited me to dinner. I suppose judges should not accept such invitations but I was so weary of Court proceedings and so ready for a little *luxure* that I accepted and was entertained by the leading merchant (and defendant) Hajī Rais in great style—champagne, and much food out of tins, while the plaintiff, an Indian merchant, supplied a troupe of dancing-girls complete with local orchestra for our delectation. I have not recorded this in my official diary.

'All this is good training for a political officer—many visitors, three languages to use apart from one's own, some court work, lots of office work involving ships and commerce as well as personal questions and direct dealings with one's Consular neighbours. Life is so full that it is hard to select items to describe; my main job in office is to construct bridges to join up some opposing interests and break down petty fences separating others. The bridges span *natural* obstacles, such as language, colour, race, &c.; the fences are artificial—etiquette, precedence, regulations, &c. A good deal of this can be done over the dinner table. Yesterday's guests comprised

The Karguzar (Persian F.O. Agent)

The Director of Customs (Belgian)

The Shaikh's Secretary (Arab)

A German merchant

An English merchant

A (very) Welsh engineer

A Scottish Chief Officer of a merchant ship.'

'(To my sister Mona, *Trade Union Organizer*) I admire your work and believe in it. Trade Boards will throw light on dark places and stir up public opinion. But so long as we worship cheapness and have no tariffs for their own sake, our "hands" must compete with the "hands" of countries not far removed from slavery and our manufacturers must sell their goods in the world's markets against rivals working in countries with no limitation of hours of labour and no Factory Acts. The trouble is only just beginning.

## THE CONSULATE

'I know you admire Lloyd George—so do I in some ways. He is a good Welshman: is he a good Briton? I would go farther and ask whether it is possible for anyone but a Manxman to be truly British. The engineers and staff of the A.P.O.C. include men of many nationalities; they are clearly happier in the company of their fellow nationals. I like them all and they have a fine professional sense of loyalty to the job before them. And what a job it is—building a refinery and laying 150 miles of pipe-line, making an oilfield starting from nothing and a port as well, with all their own medical sanitary postal telegraphic services, their own ships and their own clubs and shops.'

'(L., Nov. 24) The Consulate in which I live was built twenty years ago by the Shaikh for my predecessor on a swamp between the edge of the date groves (which are in other hands) and low-water mark. The floor is below high spring-tide level when the river is in flood; the little front garden, adorned by flowers and shrubs from Worcester, has slowly been reclaimed from the river. Each riparian owner or tenant is responsible for his part of the flood bank and every year or so the bank is revetted with a few big canoe loads of clayey mud, full of reed roots. I have made a stone pier which replaces the two date-tree logs, slippery with mud, over which for twenty years the Consul and his visitors and the mail officers with their bags have passed, not without many slips. The Union Jack flies over the Consulate from dawn to dusk. I should like a flagstaff in front of the house, but that would be resented, for there is a tradition that this implies territorial rights. The garden behind the house, surrounded by a high mud wall, is not mine: I have the use of it, but the trees belong to an old Saiyid—a reputed descendant of the Prophet. The tops of the trees have just reached the level of the roof of the ground floor and I can, by favour of the owner, pick ripe dates without leaving the premises. There are three rooms on the first floor: they face the river and are shaded by a deep veranda supported by wooden poles which I have just replaced by stone pillars made up of old stones used for the same purpose perhaps a thousand years ago, dug up at Ahwaz and floated down stream.

## THE CONSULATE

'Mud huts on the north side have given place to my new annexe, built like the Consulate of yellow bricks, tile shaped, backed by mud bricks, an outer skin of which makes a thick cool wall. The roof is flat, Zanzibar mangrove poles, overlaid by reed mats from Basrah. Over this a layer of dry manure, over this again a heavy coating of mud plaster made by mixing straw, manure and river mud, and allowing it to rot for some days. Then it is thoroughly mixed by driving a bullock round and round, knee deep in the paste, which is then carried in a hod or basket to the roof. It sounds primitive, but it is in fact very much cooler than any other or more modern type of roof which can be devised at a reasonable price. Water for all purposes is held in conical porous pots. They act as filters for the muddy river water which emerges quite clean through the pot and is ready to drink when collected in a jar at the bottom. In summer it is put into smaller porous jars and hung up in the shade where the wind serves to cool it. At the height of summer I drink about two quarts a day and it almost all evaporates through the skin. I sleep at night, from the vernal until after the autumnal equinox, on the roof under the stars, with my water-jug by my side. If it is very hot I spill the contents over the sheet which covers me—I have no mattress; the bed is a webbing of broad tapes. There are mosquitoes, but I do not bother with a net: I have got used to them like the local natives and they do not keep me awake for long except when I happen to be sleeping near a marsh up river where there is a different and bigger breed, "as big as bees" as an Arab said to me one night. A bit of raw meat outside the net, if one has one, or near the bed is a good rival attraction.

'It is winter now and I sleep indoors under two blankets but stick to my traditional cold bath at sunrise.'

'(L., Dec. 12) The Manager of the new branch of the Imperial Bank of Persia, R. N. Dewar-Durie, has arrived and is pleased with the house I selected; his wife will soon follow. He stayed with me for some days and I much enjoyed his company. A day after he left three missionaries from Isfahan appeared unexpectedly on the doorstep—one a lady and one an invalid—and asked to be put up for a few days. Sir

### SIR WILLIAM WILLCOCKS

William Willcocks was due from Basrah an hour later and I was bound to go up river with him. So I left the house to them with strict orders to the cook to do me credit as well as himself. Poor things, they were worn with three weeks travel by mule over the hills to Ahwaz, and looked thin and tired. I must order more bed-linen. I could only give two of them clean sheets.

'I was about to leave in a launch for Ahwaz with the fiery Sir William when I was told that my major-domo, the head *farrash* or carpet-spreader, had pneumonia, and my surveyor had bronchitis. The cook had had words with the butler, who had beaten him over the head with a ladle. I put the head missionary in charge and hoped for the best. He must have done his job well, for on my return all concerned were feeling better.

'On the way up stream Sir William enlivened the journey by elaborating his ideas as to the explanation of some portions of Genesis and Exodus which have the endorsement of Sayce of Cambridge. The great flood was a 24-foot rise of the Euphrates simultaneously with a similar rise of the Tigris and Karun, spring tides and a southerly gale and heavy rain. These things have never since coincided, but if they did the results would be as described in Genesis: the land—even the mounds (= *jebel*, but miscalled mountains in Genesis) on which Arabs live in winter and spring would be covered. The ark rested by tradition on rising ground near Karbala—not on the mountain of that name, miscalled Ararat by Armenians. The confusion of tongues started when, after the flood, immigrants came in from all sides.

'Willcocks was exceedingly good company—old but full of energy, enthusiastic but full of wisdom. He is so careless about himself and so ready for any fresh adventure that I fear he may overstrain even his tough body. He highly approves of the plans and maps made by the Indian Survey Department's man, Storrs, and myself.'

'(L., Dec. 24) King Leopold has died and so I called in top hat and frock-coat on the Belgian Director yesterday to condole with him on the death of King Leopold and to invite him to dinner at Christmas. I have applied for a second

## CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES

clerk, for the traffic of the port has doubled, and may double again next year. (I have taken more in fees in a month than my predecessor in a year.) Also for a third surveyor. Those I have are doing splendid work and I spend long hours listening to their (Hindustani) reports and making English summaries. I am at work on a third I.B. Report and on a more ambitious record of British Relations with this part of the world, to prepare which I have dug with some effect into the records of the far-distant past—a mine which would in these parts repay a lifetime's study.'

'(L., Dec. 28) Christmas went well. Most of the British colony attended Christmas Service at the Consulate. I read the lessons and one of your sermons, the prayers for the King and Royal Family, and for Unity, but not for Parliament which must look after itself. I ended with two or three of the Collects I like best and which I know, as indeed I know most of them, by heart. Then a glass of wine all round and a piece of cake with it.

'Later a jovial party who considerately brought their own wine, the Belgian Director, in particular, producing a bottle of Burgundy for each of us and the Captain of the *Malanur* bringing a small barrel of English beer. All would have been perfect had not the cook marked the occasion by drinking himself silly before dinner. He was penitent next day when he brought his bill; to save me trouble he had got it written out by a Persian friend who knew some English, including as items

one calf, fully fatted

four pleasant young geoses

a bull's tongue ensaladed (i.e. *ensalado*, in Portuguese = salted).

'On Boxing Day I dined at the Crows' Nest with the Consul, F. E. Crow, and his wife and younger daughter, a very attractive girl.

'(Dec. 31) The year has ended badly for me with severe toothache and no dentist nearer than Karachi. It kept me awake three nights and kept me off serious work all day. At last my face began to swell; then a boil formed on the gum;

#### AFTER TWO YEARS IN PERSIA

finally it burst—the pain went. But sooner or later the tooth must come out—when I have time.’

Thus ended my second year in Persia. I was still nominally an Indian Army officer on temporary loan to the Foreign Department, temporarily acting as Consul. The Indian Guard had gone back to India—I have not recorded the date. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company had started operations in earnest. Constitutional troubles were still acute throughout Persia and were causing some anxiety in Mesopotamia. Of these and similar matters my diary and letters said little: they were a part of the pattern of life as I knew it, recorded in detail in current official documents but leaving little impression on my mind. ‘How far’, I wrote on December 31st,

‘Major Cox will approve of my doings I do not know; I fear I may have done too much—he warned me against excess of zeal! But I could not do less: things move quickly; one must be ahead of the march of events or be crushed by them or, what is almost as bad, passed by. The political sky is stormy, our *de jure* position in many directions weak. German trade is increasing fast, as also Russian. Everything depends on personalities—*les affaires sont moins importantes que les hommes* in these parts, and in Cox we have a personality who carries very great weight. To succeed him one day is as far as my vaulting ambition reaches.’

## CHAPTER IV

1910

### *Mohammerah: Oilfields: Surveys and Reports: Visit of Sir John Jackson*

'*Mohammerah (L., Jan. 15)* My day consists of arguments and negotiations with Arabs and Persians, official and unofficial, in connection for the most part with the Oil Company's affairs. Their concession dating from 1901 is very loosely worded; decisions reached now upon small issues will be regarded as precedents in time to come. What, for example, is the English equivalent and meaning of *matériaux et appareil*?

'My first visitor this year is David Fraser, a special correspondent of *The Times*, with experience in India, S. Africa, China, Turkey in Asia and even Central Asia. His talk, and Foreign Office Confidential print, serve to remind me of the strange processes of balance and counterbalance, poise and counterpoise, which seem mainly to occupy the Foreign Offices of the world.

'He was followed by an I.M.S. doctor from the Kermanshah Consulate, and the Commander of the R.I.M.S. *Lawrence*, Hutchinson, and his wife—all with something new and interesting to talk about. I do not grudge what I spend on keeping open house.

'I see Hugh [my brother] writes from Germany that they have their Christmas tree on Christmas *Eve*. That is, I do not doubt, a custom that has its origin in the East. In Genesis *the evening and the morning* were the first day: in England people talk of sennights and fortnights. Christmas Eve is short for Christmas Evening, the Evening of Christmas; and what is here called Sunday evening is what we should call Saturday evening, for the day ends at sundown; the first hour of the day, or night, is the first hour after sunrise or sunset and the twelve hours are thus long or short according to the



## PRAISE FROM SIR PERCY COX

time of year. The sixth hour is always midday. For practical purposes in a country which has no railways it works well enough.

‘Two calendars are in common use—lunar for all purposes except tax-paying or Customs, which use a solar calendar of twelve months starting from March 21st, the vernal equinox. The position of the moon in the sky will be exactly the same on the corresponding days of each lunar month; in a country where travelling is entirely by caravan and for six months of the year largely by night this is convenient.

‘Europe also has the lunar calendar, but it is used solely for ecclesiastical purposes: hence our “Moveable Feasts” such as Easter.

‘Farmers sow and reap and put the tups to the ewes according to the position of the constellations, just as in Virgil’s day, *vide* the *Eclogues*. Customs that seem at first sight rustic and bizarre are really no less reasonable and well founded than our own.’

‘(L., Mar. 8) I was relieved and encouraged by receiving this month a copy of a dispatch to India in which Major Cox says that

“During his tenure of office as Acting Consul Lieut. Wilson has, in addition to his excellent work on political matters and in surveying, taken up the questions of pushing British trade and Consular matters generally with great intelligence and zeal”.

So I have not done too much; this is ample reward for the spade work that went to my first annual trade report in which I abandoned my predecessor’s rather jejune form in favour of a new model and for a monthly circular to all British firms telling them anything I knew that might be useful to them. I hoped that they would reciprocate but was disappointed: they all run as rivals in blinkers.’

On March 21st I attended Persian New Year celebrations as British Consul. It was my first experience of this pleasant formality. There was much handshaking, many congratulatory phrases to be uttered and answered.

## PROBATIONER IN THE POLITICAL DEPARTMENT

I spent two hours rehearsing them with my little Persian interpreter.

‘Each compliment has its correct gambit; each answer its conventional supplement—though variations are possible within narrow limits. We drank sweet lemonade and orange juice, tea and coffee, a few cakes and a little fruit. We were all in our best uniforms—I in my 32nd Sikh Pioneer scarlet, making a brave but most unconsular show.’

On March 26th the flooded Karun, spring tides, and a southerly wind combined to flood the Consulate 4 feet deep in water. I awoke to hear waves beating at the door of the house; the stone pillars newly put up in front as part of the fence had fallen; the plaster in every room on the ground floor was ruined. My carpets were deep in heavy mud. When the tide receded small fish lay on the office floor among parcels and papers. I put the damage at £100, of which at least two-thirds fell on me.

On the following day, however, I was consoled by a letter notifying my appointment as Probationer in the Political Department from March 20th, 1910. This was another milestone. Major Trevor, Major Cox’s Deputy, added a kindly word of approbation from himself, and to my surprise the Foreign Secretary, whom I had never seen (Sir Louis Dane), sent me a personal telegram of congratulation. My pleasure was mingled with real regret at the knowledge that I had seen the last of my Regiment.

‘(L., Apr. 10) Major Cox came to Mohammerah in the *Lawrence*; I had prepared a good dinner for him and invited everyone, British and Persian, whom I could find room for to dinner, and everyone else to lunch. I had turned my bedroom into a reception room, and slept on the roof. But he could not land owing to quarantine regulations, nor could I go on board. He sat on the companion way and I stood in a canoe while he told me that he had procured my appointment to the Department, not without difficulty, and would like to

## THE KHOR MUSA CREEKS

keep me at Mohammerah, but foresaw insuperable difficulty as I was a probationer and the post had been scheduled as "senior".

'After this we spent four hours in the sun in this position transacting official business. We were both tired by the time we had finished with each other. He left at daybreak and I, with bad toothache again, had to arrange for the funeral and burial of a Belgian lady who had been staying for a few weeks with the Director and died suddenly. At the Director's request I read the burial service myself, in full uniform, and was photographed whilst doing so in order that the relations might know that all had been done decently. A mustard plaster relieved the pain of my tooth and brought me sleep. It is the same tooth. I must find a dentist, but cannot afford the time or money entailed by a visit to Karachi.'

, '(L., Apr. 15) I have come to Bushire; the Residency Doctor has pulled out the tooth without difficulty and without an anaesthetic, and I am again guest of Maj. and Mrs. Cox—both of them as kind as ever. He asked me whether I wanted to stay at Mohammerah if I had the chance. I said that I would like to do another six months there and then move on somewhere but still under his orders. I wanted to get all the experience I could before I was 30. But I should like some leave between jobs, if only three months. He then told me that the Navy were much interested in my reconnaissance of the Khor Musa Bahmanshir creeks and wanted some more details and soundings as soon as may be. So I telegraphed to my clerk to charter an open fishing-boat to be ready on my return, with copies of my last reports and, seeing through glasses a subsidiary mail-steamer in port about to leave for the Shatt-al-Arab, cut short my visit and hastened back to Mohammerah. Twenty-four hours later I was in an open dhow living on lentils and rice, taking soundings and bearings. Khor Musa has long been regarded as the best deep-water harbour in the Gulf; what is unknown is the land connections. It might be a railway terminus, though there is no fresh water and no firm soil near the shore. This job took three days. I returned at midnight dead tired to find three strangers in the Consulate occupying all the bedrooms

## DEATH OF KING EDWARD VII

including my own, so I lay down on the floor in the veranda, on the brick tiles with my haversack as pillow, and slept till dawn. A pile of papers awaited me, including a telegram ordering me to go to Ahwaz at once to negotiate with the Shaikh of Mohammerah. I saw my guests at breakfast, commended them to my cook and factotum, whom I hope they tip well, and left by launch after lunch, having ordered horses to meet me at dawn half-way up the river. I slept well and by four o'clock was at the rendezvous. I rode 50 miles non-stop with one relay, reaching Ahwaz by midday. I went straight to the Shaikh, being assured of a good meal there, did my business, and returned comfortably that night by the launch which had meanwhile arrived.'

'(*L., May 12*) You must not think that the work of which I write so much to you is particularly important or constructive. I am not, like you, shaping men's thoughts. I am just a small cog on a great wheel in a big machine, content if I wear well, do not creak, or pick up grit.'

The quite unexpected news of King Edward's death plunged us in genuine gloom which was, I think, shared by many Persians and foreigners here who are not British. In spite of Parliaments the figure and personality of the King loom large in the minds of British subjects and many others outside England as the centre of our corporate national life, the one permanent thing in our constitution. I was a guard of honour at Clifton in 1900 to his mother: my Commission to the Army was under his signature (literally, for kings sign at the top of a paper—as is still common in Persia in official documents).

'I hastened to send official notifications in the prescribed form, and to drape the Consulate in black, the flag at half-mast. I warned all British subjects to wear mourning, and put black bands on all Consulate employees. Most of them at once put on black clothes borrowed for the occasion.'

An Indian cloth merchant lent me 100 yards of black cloth, offering to use it to drape the rooms and veranda,

## WALI AND SHAIKH

and to cut it as necessary. I accepted his offer: another Indian lent me 100 yards of black cotton cloth on the same terms. Not to be outdone, the Shaikh's factotum and agent, Haḥī Rais, now an old friend, draped his own room in black.

'This all helped to create a good impression and to lessen the excitement and tension caused by what Cox has described as the most serious incident in these waters for fifty years. The Wali of Basrah, a "young Turk", quarrelled with the Shaikh of Mohammerah, on a trivial issue—the alleged misdoings of their respective subjects and in particular of one of the Shaikh's headmen living on property on the Turkish bank owned by the Shaikh. The Wali cut the usual discussions short by ordering the Turkish gunboat *Marmaris* to bombard the village. The shell hit one of the Shaikh's houses, occupied by his mother and one of his wives. The latter died a few days later.

'The Wali then sent a series of insulting messages to the Shaikh, who has quite enough influence among Arabs on the Turkish side to stage a first-class revolt against the Wali.

'As you may imagine, I have been busy trying to get peace with honour (for the Shaikh, who is a very good friend of ours). My telegraph bill is over £100. I have had no time for anything but this business. Lt.-Col. Cox, as he now is, the Minister and the Foreign Office have all approved my action, which is satisfactory, for I had to act first and report later. The Wali has been rebuked: the Shaikh mollified.'

'(L., May 21) There is a lull after the storm. I have a director of the Company, John Lloyd, in bed with fever in the Consulate, sent there by the doctor because it is the healthiest house here, which could not have been said six months ago. Being feverish he is little attracted by the food my cook struggles to provide, but I do not take it amiss. It is something even to be able to grumble when one has high fever.

'This is the season of high winds from the NW. and of dust, dust, dust, day and night. Quite clean, straight from the

desert, but all-pervading. In a room it is hot and stuffy; on the roof it is hot and so windy that mosquitoes are driven off.

'I went up to Basrah again for a night with the Consul, whose elder daughter is now well and truly engaged to the British Consul at Muscat, a colleague of mine in the Indian Political Department. They were all very hospitable: we exchanged views as to the *Marmaris*, he backing the Wali and I the Shaikh. Some of the British and foreign colony came in after dinner for music—some very good coffee, and very good wine.

'A married man can do this sort of thing much better than a bachelor like me who cannot play the piano, or sing, or play cards, or tennis, but can only walk and ride and shoot and work and talk "shop". He has as many good books about the house as I have and we have exchanged some to our mutual advantage. He is old enough to be my father, so our conversations on the *Marmaris* were so far as I am concerned at a disadvantage. He has had a great deal of experience which I lack, and takes a rather cynical, distant view of such matters. His very nice family, however, do not allow him to be a bore at meals, and his younger daughter unerringly changed course whenever the current of conversation seemed likely to carry us on to the rocks of local politics, for which I was grateful to her.'

'(L., June 21) I am back at Mohammerah after a few days at Bushire with Cox: while I was there a telegram from Simla ordered me to remain at Mohammerah for the time being. The *Marmaris* affair probably made the Foreign Department decide to keep me there a little longer. I had a number of despatches to draft which I asked Cox to criticize before I signed them. He did so in a very kindly spirit and did me the honour of letting me make my own observations on his draft covering letter sending them to India or Tehran. He is a master of official style and has the great advantage of knowing all or nearly all the people who will handle these questions at the other end. Lighthouses in the Gulf; Baghdad Railway; the position of the Shaikh of Koweit *vis-à-vis* Turkey, and the Shaikh of Mohammerah *vis-à-vis* Persia; Arms Traffic in the

## THE BAHAI MOVEMENT

Persian Gulf: customary tribal and territorial rights in the Persian Gulf Pearl Fisheries, far out at sea and beyond the three-mile limit; the activities of German and Russian traders and Consuls—"Constitutional" anarchy in its many forms—these are just a selection at random of current issues.

'He does nothing carelessly; he is never in a hurry; if need be he would work 16 hours on end, doing thoroughly what he might have done in an hour superficially. Every local notable is indexed and cross-indexed; every town and village ever mentioned in current despatches and telegrams identified and placed on a map if it is not there already; every old file searched to confirm statements that might well be taken for granted or as "generally agreed". His staff have an unbounded admiration for him, as also the Navy. In formal matters he is punctilious: so careful of the dignity of others that they instinctively pay regard to his own position. And he has a genius for summing up a position in a few sentences, or in one. His telegrams are long, his despatches even longer, but they carry conviction and leave few loopholes for criticism on points of fact. The Government may differ from his conclusions, and reject his advice as to action, but they scarcely ever dispute his facts or his deductions and have to avoid committing themselves (perhaps quite properly) by concluding that "on grounds of expediency, however, in present circumstances and pending fuller consideration of this question in all its aspects, H.M.G. prefer to take no action", &c., &c.'

'(L., June 24) You ask me about the *Bahai* movement. It bears something of the same relation to the Shiah faith as that of "Christian Science" to the Church of England. It is not negligible, for it has attracted many good men, but is not politically important, for few good men are to be found in political circles in Persia. It is unlikely to penetrate deep, or to become popular. It is in part at least a development of the *Babi* movement with the addition of ethical ideas which are common both to Islam and to Christianity. It is the outcome of the widespread discontent of educated Persians with the outlook of their rulers and with the general tone of society. But Persians tend to say one thing and do another: they

## THE JUDGEMENT OF SOLOMON

profess one set of principles but ignore them in practice. This I suppose may be said of all men in all countries at all times, but it obtrudes itself in Persia just now because it is "good form" to proclaim the need for a pure administration, &c., but customary to take and give bribes. Arrant bare-faced rogues will preach an eloquent sermon, over a cup of coffee, on the need for a high standard of honesty while engaged through an agent in a shameless conspiracy to rob their Government. Discussion is often a species of mental and verbal gymnastics.'

'(*Diary, June 1910*) Tribal courts, conducted by the elder men, are as old an institution here as in Afghanistan or the NW. Frontier. Sometimes, however, difficult cases are taken before some grey-beard who has earned a reputation for wisdom and perspicacity. I was told of one old Arab to whom Shaikh Khaz'al himself sometimes remitted doubtful issues. Not long ago, for instance, there was an Arab who had two wives; by the younger and junior he had a child; the elder, though he liked her much better, was barren. Yet the younger wife was jealous of the elder. One day the younger woman asked the elder to tend the baby, which lay, its face covered with a sheet to keep off the flies, in its wicker cot. After a while she returned, lifted the child to suckle it, and cried out that it was dead. And so it was—a needle had been driven into its head. She at once accused the elder of the murder—and adduced the jealousy of a barren wife as a reason. The elder denied it: the husband disbelieved her and was about to kill her. She demanded—as of right—that her case should go before a Council of Elders: they in turn sent for Saiyid Muhammad the 'Alim. The Council sat on either side of a mat hut—50 feet long with an arched roof—open at either end. Saiyid Muhammad questioned each woman separately in the presence of all the elders. Then he announced to each—in the presence of the other—that they must prove their innocence by submitting to an ordeal. Each woman must in turn walk naked down the centre of the tent between the ranks of seated men.

'The elder did not hesitate and did so. The younger refused. "If you decline to strip, your guilt is evident," said the



## RITCHIE AND JAMESON

'Alim. "So be it," she replied. "I am innocent, but I will not submit to dishonour." Again and again he pressed her, displaying before her the knife that would end her life, as that of a bullock or sheep. Still she refused.

'Then he turned to the Council. "She who was without shame, she is guilty." They seized the elder woman who was watching the younger, and made her pay the penalty of murder.

'In exchange I told the story of Solomon and the baby. It seemed to my listeners [and I told it often in Luristan] perfectly natural. Solomon is much revered among Moslems and they have their own stories about him.'

'(L., July 2) I have spent a week at Ahwaz and have seen something of Charles Ritchie who is laying the pipe-line, a tall red-faced Scottish engineer, heavy-handed, impetuous and energetic, full of fiery determination to see the line through. The great pipes come up by steamer and are landed at intervals on the bank, whence they are transported by mule-drawn *gins*—two wheels at the end of a long shaft, with a semicircular axis, under which the long pipes hang in a chain: there is one *gin* at each end of a nest of a dozen or so. The pipe is being laid above ground to avoid corrosion: the hotter it gets the easier it will be to pump the oil. It is laid serpent-wise in great curves, so as to allow for expansion. He has a motor-car—a Darracq—the first I have ever ridden in or seen at close quarters, and is thinking of getting an aeroplane for himself.

'One of his best men is another Scottish engineer, J. Jameson, a healthy, genial man with an immense fund of energy and good temper. Ritchie is not easy to deal with but I have some hold over him, for I am already one of the oldest inhabitants (European) of Arabistan, so numerous have been the changes of recent months, and he cannot do much without the Consulate.

'Much labour is being imported from India, and much from other parts of Persia; some from the Gulf ports and some from Turkey. The weight of pipe-line and machinery to be imported is some 20,000 tons this year. They need strong men: and they pay good wages: but disputes and accidents

## THE OILFIELDS AFTER A YEAR

are inevitable and if non-Persian subjects are involved they generally end up at the Consulate.'

'(L., July 2) My garden would rejoice your heart. Sun-flowers 13 feet high, hollyhocks as big; immense petunias, grapes, plantains, watermelons, pumpkins and egg-plant, onions and lettuce, broad beans and figs and pomegranates, all under the date trees some of which must carry at least 3 cwt. of dates. I believe some have been known to bear 800 lb. or so year after year. I have leased some ground adjoining the Consulate on which to build huts for my married servants whom I want to have under my eye but not under my nose. Servants can be enticed away like wives, and there is no redress. I have the best servants in Mohammerah—not bought ready-made but educated. My best factotum Mirza Daud is I believe thoroughly honest: he is patient, wise and good-natured in all his dealings. I seldom refuse him a request, which speaks well for him.

'On his advice I have installed a fan that is worked by an oil lamp for which, unlike the boy who pulls the fan, I feel no compassion. It adds to the comfort of life and I do not think it will make me less able to do without it when I abandon the luxury of the Consulate for the road again.'

'(L., July 15) I have visited the oilfields after an absence of a year. I did 60 miles by car, a new experience, and the last 30 through the hills on horseback. The changes made in a year are astonishing, even to me: the great 8-inch pipe-line runs over two ranges of hills; a motor road will soon be complete. The cart track is far better than before. Houses are being built and store rooms, workshops and new rigs. Because everybody is hard at work there is little discontent, and my friend Dr. Young is more than ever the presiding genius, with a larger hospital and some good subordinates.

'On my return I found waiting for me my four volumes on SW. Persia, printed by the I.B., with a word of official praise from H.E. the Commander-in-Chief for valuable work done on behalf of the General Staff, India. It is signed by Sir D. Haig, C.G.S. (O.C.) and was sent me by R. L. Birdwood, also an Old Cliftonian. They were of course written before the development of the oilfields: this reduces their value in some

## THE A.P.O.C. AND ITS BARGES

directions but increases it, and especially that of the notebooks on which they were based, in others. What was said to me then as to the ownership and value of land and crops is more likely to be true than what is said now, when the advent of the Company has trebled and quadrupled prices.'

'(L., Sept. 3) At last I have definite orders to return to India to do my 6 months' training as a Political Probationer in Treasury work and in Court Procedure (Criminal and Civil). Cox writes that he is loth to let me go, but he is told that further delay would prejudice my position in the Department. But I am first to do a railway reconnaissance survey through unknown and unmapped country, full of robbers and thieves, to penetrate which has long been my ambition. Then I may get a few months leave before going to India. I do not want to specialize on Persia and the Persian Gulf but to keep a foot in and an eye on India.'

This, however, was easier said than done. Trouble arose as to the barges of the A.P.O.C. The Government claimed that they were dutiable and could not be used on the Karun unless they paid duty or in any case on the Upper Karun; moreover they declined, on other grounds, to allow them to ply on the Karun unless they paid tonnage dues prescribed for merchant shipping under a convention or declaration older by some years than the Company's concessions. The Persian Foreign Office Agent and the Belgian Director of Customs made common cause against the Company, who appealed to me. I knew that a reference to Tehran would produce either a deadlock or a compromise: our Legation had enough on its hands without such added burdens. What I actually did, or how I did it, I forget, but I received, not long afterwards (Sept. 18), the appreciation of the Viceroy himself (Sir C. Hardinge) for the action I took.

'Maj. Trevor brought to notice the great credit due to Lt. Wilson for the excellent manner in which he championed the Oil Company's cause in the matter of their steam launch on the Upper Karun and as regards the Company's barges. His

### H. M. S. 'REDBREAST'

Excellency the Viceroy agrees in both cases that much credit is due to Lt. Wilson and desires his appreciation to be made 'known to him.'

Writing home a week later I commented:

'This shows that nothing succeeds like success.'

'(L., Sept. 23) I have just seen the last of a commercial traveller who nearly died in the Consulate of heat and exhaustion. I fed him on whatever he could eat and drink, including champagne, and think he is fit now. These commercial travellers have a hard job out here: they are quite intrepid, but not always well equipped physically. I enjoy their "shop", and their artless contempt for the people to whom they sell goods, and their unfailing and unwanted sympathy with me for having to live in such surroundings, without ice, or fans, or soda water.'

A few days later I wrote from H.M.S. *Redbreast*, in which I had travelled up the Khor Musa:

'Spreckley, the Navigator, is son of a Worcester family and a delightful person. His father, a brewer, must be as pleasant as Spreckley, who talked of him with admiration and affection. So also Smith, an Artificer Engineer, who hails from Hallam. It is my first experience on board one of H.M. Ships and Vessels. Because I suppose they are always more or less on service as well as on duty, the standard of discipline and work is very high—higher than in the Army. I heard no complaint from any officer of the conditions of life which for them, in these waters, are as hard and depressing as in the worst land Station on the frontier. On the other hand, we Indian Army officers are at it for life: the Navy are not in the Gulf for over two years.'

They had not been on shore for three months and on arrival at Mohammerah I did my best to return their hospitality.

'I bought ice from Basrah, a luxury I rarely afford myself, and several cases of beer, 6 dozen bottles of beer in each case. The whole contents of two cases were put into my tin bath

### THE SHAIKH A K.C.I.E.

with iced water round them. When the naval ratings, petty officers and men, came back from playing football on the desert they all drank two bottles each. For the petty officers I had something to eat in addition. The officers went career-ing over the desert on the horses of my escort, two of which came home riderless. For them too there was beer, also iced, and later, for those who could stop, dinner and an exhibition by a troupe of dancing girls arranged by Haḥī Rais. The Shaikh sent two canoes full of fruit for the men and two young bullocks—beef is a rare luxury here. Next morning before dawn some of these indefatigable officers were waiting for me with a cutter to take them to my best duck and snipe shoots. I was back at 9 a.m. in time for a full day's work and a dinner on board, in sweltering heat and a singlet, which lasted till 3 a.m., by which hour the Navigator and I were the sole survivors. The rest of the party were asleep on stretchers. I did not wake till 9.0: then I returned to a shocked Consulate, still in my evening attire, to begin work again.'

'(L., Oct. 20) Cox has spent four days here on the *Lawrence* and I have spent all day on board, from midday to midnight acting as his Private Secretary in the absence of the regular incumbent, doing his cyphers and much of his typing, at which I am now fairly competent. I admire him more than ever.

'He came to confer the insignia of the K.C.I.E. upon the Shaikh on behalf of the Viceroy under the instructions of the F.O. The ceremony took place on board and was as simple as it was impressive. Cox, in full uniform, spoke finely in Arabic; the Shaikh, in Arab dress, replied with dignity and sincerity. After refreshments had been formally served he left under his new and increased salute of guns.

'Cox told me that he had tried again to keep me here, but that the Government of India felt that I was too young. I said I was delighted to have gained his approval, but felt I had been long enough under a roof and wanted to get on to travel while I was still physically fit for hard climbing.

'Spurred by your work on the Annals of Worcester Cathedral I have been pressing on with my *Précis* of Information concerning the connection of the Hon. East India Company

## AN OUTBREAK OF CHOLERA

and the British Government with the Shatt-al-Arab and Arabistan from 1600 to date. I showed the raw draft to Cox, who was pleased, for such studies are much in his line; and he thinks that some of it, relating to Perso-Turkish frontier questions, may be of real importance one day, for the frontier has never been settled. The present arrangement is a *modus vivendi* dating from the Treaty of Erzerum half a century ago. He was so much impressed that he urged me to give it precedence over other work and to finish it while I still had the material at hand.

‘His enthusiasm is infectious and acts as a tonic. After four days of almost unremitting labour he leaves me fresher than he found me, also the wine and food on the *Lawrence* are very good.

‘I want a good wedding present for Lorimer: useful but not utilitarian, value £——. He has been a very good friend and has set my feet on many useful paths. I fear we shall not see him again in these parts.’

‘(L., Nov. 16) Mrs. Crow and the younger of the two daughters, Barbara, have been here for two days on their way from the wedding of the elder daughter in India: the quarantine period is seven days and if they went straight to Basrah they would have to go to a foul and insanitary Quarantine Station. The Persians are content with five days, so they can stop with me. It was most pleasant to have them in the house—ladies are scarce round here, especially unmarried ones.

‘The day they left a travelling dentist came. I fitted up a spare room as surgery and put myself under his care with good results. It is three years since I had my teeth looked to.

‘A day or two later cholera broke out in the town: the first news I had of it was a letter from my Persian clerk which read as follows:

“‘I started to come to office this morning. On the way I saw a man going bad with cholera. I was afraid but walked a little on. Then I saw my heart was afraid and my body very shaking, and I get a pain in the head from afraid and cannot walk any more.

The best people in the town have gone to Ahwaz by ship

‘LEVAVI OCULOS AD MONTES’

to escape the disease. Please sent me a bottle of port as you graciously promised. It is a very good cure.”’

The epidemic was serious-but touched no Europeans: I did what I could to help, going from house to house with the Quarantine M.O., but it was little enough. My main anxiety was to ensure that it did not spread to Ahwaz and get among the Oil Company’s imported labour at Abadan. The Shaikh imposed a strict and effective prohibition on travel up or down river and six weeks later no fresh cases were reported.

‘(L., Nov. 27) Fresh local trouble involving the A.P.O.C. Much is afoot in the Persian Gulf and SW. Persia and I did not like to ask Cox who was busy at Muscat with Arms Traffic matters to approve of my action in advance. So I used my discretion and went ahead and was relieved a fortnight later to hear that the Minister and F.O. approved of the line I took.

‘I have also heard this week that when I hand over this job I shall go to Luristan to make a preliminary reconnaissance survey of a south-north railway from the Shatt-al-Arab on the Persian Gulf to Burujird and Hamadan. This has long been my dearest ambition. The country is almost unknown to Europeans and quite unmapped: the tribes are wild and some years ago attacked Capt. Lorimer and Maj. Douglas, then our Military Attaché at Tehran, and did both of them rather serious damage. Someone has to map this country properly and I want to be the first to do it. I have so often looked across the plains from Dizful to the Luristan mountains, part of the Zagros chain, and wondered what lay on the other side. *Levavi oculos ad montes*—I lifted up mine eyes unto the hills—though I cannot add like the Psalmist, *deinde advenit auxilium*—from whence cometh my help. I am already making plans, selecting equipment, and have taken steps to discover the tribal chiefs who can best help me through—for a consideration. Meanwhile I must press on with local affairs, including my *Précis* so as to leave my successor with a clean office table.’

## GUN-RUNNING AT DIBAI

‘(L., Nov. 17) I am amused to hear that Dr. — describes the Wilson family as anaemic; what of Papa, approaching his seventieth birthday in full vigour, what of Edward in S. Africa, 6 ft. 4 in. and a great rowing man, what indeed of me? I am almost too full-blooded at times and often feel I would sooner fight a man than negotiate with him.

‘I want you to read *The Glory of the Shia World*, by P. M. Sykes of the Indian Political Department. It is his best book and he has written several really good ones on Persia.

‘This is from a distressed pilgrim whom I repatriated:

“I hereby humbly endeavour from the bottom of my heart to thank you for saving me from starvation, cholera, &c. I shall return the money lent and to my last hour shall pray for your prosperity.”

But he has not sent the money.’

‘(L., Dec. 29) Troubles grow apace. Trouble over gun-running at Dibai. H.M.S. *Hyacinth* landed a party: 14 killed and wounded on our side, 40 Arabs on the other. Two British subjects murdered on an Island in the Gulf. The Residency Surgeon’s house at Bushire attacked and £100 worth of goods stolen. I spent Christmas at Bushire not because it was Christmas, but because of urgent work to be done. Had I been a week earlier I might have gone with H.M.S. *Hyacinth* to Dibai and, knowing this time something of the ways of these people, might possibly have prevented bloodshed. At the Residency I met for the first time Admiral Slade, who commands the East India Station, with his very talented wife and daughter and a pleasant friend, Miss Eyre, whom Crosthwaite, Cox’s Personal Assistant, very properly contemplates marrying. She is of the Eyre (& Spottiswoode) family who have printed and published, as King’s Printers, half the Blue Books that fill my shelves, but she is not by any means a blue-stocking.

‘I sleep seven hours always, eight hours sometimes. More than that I do not require. I study on Sundays, but not at the sort of things I work at on week-days, and I stick still to my Bible and Prayer-Book reading. Just now I am trying to learn more Persian and Arabic. I have reached a point of



## SURVEYING

fluency which does not assist, but impedes, real progress. I can make myself perfectly understood by anyone and can understand almost anyone. That is really only the beginning, but the "Law of Diminishing Returns" begins to apply and progress on the higher slopes of Parnassus is slow.

'You may well ask why the Government send me, an amateur surveyor, to look for possible railway alignments instead of a railway engineer. The answer is that it would be a waste of time and money to send an engineer, or a party of engineers, to study possible routes until enough is known of the country to enable them to select two or three alignments for detailed study. I can get through single-handed because I know something of the people and their ways and travel light, which skilled engineers seldom care to do—and I can do so cheaply. Moreover I have done a lot of mapping; I have instruments such as an Abney Level, a barometer (quite reliable for weeks at a time here in summer and most of the spring when atmospheric pressure varies very little), as well as a large plane table. I can use a dumpy level and theodolite for main triangulation and get the relative position of most peaks and passes correct to within a mile or so, which serves immediate purposes.

'I have travelled a little and talked a lot with the Company's geologists. I can record the sequence of rocks and give them a fair idea of the dip of strata and the general direction of a range, and by entering the gorges can tell fairly well what they would disclose to a skilled eye, though not to mine. These geologists are great travellers, fine map makers, and marvellously observant: they can indicate with some competence where *not* to search for oil. Sooner or later they will be able to suggest where it should be sought. For the present they are anxious for every report I can give them of tiny seepages of oil or pitch, even by hearsay, and I have told them of several that I have seen and more I have heard of. So my survey will serve a double purpose. On the political side it is just possible that it will lead to the reopening of the commercial route from Dizful to Burujird, which would open to British goods and shipping a market worth over £1 million of which Russia now has a monopoly. This part of Persia is

## A HOUSE FULL OF GUESTS

diplomatically a neutral sphere in which we or Russia are free to push our respective commercial interests. Having the oilfields in British hands, it is incumbent on us not to allow them to be imperilled by a Russian *Drang nach Süden* (southwards push) by means of a Russian controlled railway and Russian trade. Russia and Britain are bound to be rivals so long as we are in India and Eastern waters and they in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

'I ended the year with the house full of guests, and your plum-puddings were acclaimed with enthusiasm. Sir John Jackson, the Public Works Contractor, was the head of the party; with him were six engineers all on their way to meet Sir W. Willecocks at Baghdad, where he has been preparing schemes for big barrages on the Euphrates and on the Tigris, and other engineering works. Jackson has executed great contracts all over the world, in S. America (Trans-Andean Railway), Singapore (Docks), Egypt and India. His main anxiety is whether, if he accepts a contract, he will get paid by the Turks. On this subject I referred him to Lorimer at Baghdad, but gave him little encouragement. The British Embassy at Constantinople, like our Legation at Tehran, find great difficulty in inducing the Sublime Porte and King of Kings respectively to meet even undisputed claims.

'We sat down sixteen to dinner and, as my Persian factotum said afterwards, "no one in the Persian Gulf could have done better than we have done. We have thrown the cloak of splendour over the bare bones of our daily life. We live on hard tack for months but we can entertain Kings without shame". Persian and Arab servants have a delightful way of identifying themselves with the household to which they belong, and when they say "we" they mean and feel it. They have worked as hard as I have and bask not in reflected glory but in the pleasant consciousness of real partnership.

'I asked next day what had happened to the broken victuals, the rest of the two turkeys, the vast plate of rice, the six chickens, and so on. My factotum explained that he had summoned the local poor to the back door that very night and had distributed all that remained, from the soup and fish and meat to the bread and cake, in order that I might

## A YEAR'S RETROSPECT

acquire merit with Almighty God. "It would not be right", he said, "to give such a dinner without remembering God and the poor; we have been lucky since we came to this country" (he has been with me for two years); "we have survived many dangers; we have not been ill. Such good actions will please Providence"—and he recited several texts from the Koran to justify his action. Though he acted without my knowledge, I could only approve warily of his charitable instinct and, perhaps a little less cordially, of the mixture of altruism and prudent self-interest that suggested it.'

Thus ended the year 1910. I had travelled less by road—only some 1,000 miles or so; I had pushed my surveys to the sea-coast and the creeks. I had made the acquaintance of Cox and the Royal Navy. I had gained experience in handling men of my own kind and race as well as Indians, Persians, and Arabs, and in the sphere of local politics and diplomacy. I had been lucky in securing the approval of my superiors for the part I played in several cases of more than local importance. I had made some progress in Persian and Arabic and was not merely resigned but glad to leave Mohammerah for fresh adventures in the mountains of SW. Persia. I rejoiced, as my letters show, quite literally in my continued good health. My particular charge, the A.P.O.C., had surmounted its first trials and survived its early errors. It was now giving me much less work to do and its local agents were dealing direct with the local authorities in many matters which at first went through the Consulate, and gaining prestige in the process. The political situation in Persia was as bad as or worse than in 1909, but the measures we had taken to strengthen the position of, and our relations with, local officials had to a large extent insulated SW. Persia from the anarchy prevailing upon the plateau. The growth of German trade was causing some concern, as was the tendency of Russian Consular and

#### INTERNATIONAL RIVALRIES

*Diplomatic officers to increase their activities in the neutral zone. Our responsibility, as the local agents of the British Government, was firstly to counter it by stimulating British trade, secondly to watch and report upon the activities of all foreign firms and Consular officers, thirdly to collect and record any information which might be of use if some emergency should arise which might call for armed intervention in SW. Persia. That we desired to avoid this at almost any cost goes without saying; it could only be avoided by strengthening the hands of the local tribal and hereditary chiefs. It was a bold policy which in later years was amply justified by events.*

## CHAPTER V

JANUARY—AUGUST 1911

### *Railway Reconnaissance in Luristan*

EARLY in January Major Haworth of the Indian Political Department arrived to take over the Consulate.

‘He is 37 and a widower, his wife having died after a fall from her horse two years ago at Kermanshah, leaving him with two small sons to look after. In some respects he is my opposite for he enjoys dancing, plays the guitar, sings well, insists on good cooking and specializes in gardening. He playfully declares that his Trade Union principles will not allow him to lay as many bricks as I try to do. He is a most interesting man in many ways, leisurely, lively, affable, widely read, radical by nature in politics, with the instinct of a pugilistic missionary for propagating his views. I think he will do well here; in any case the place will be none the worse for a change. I received some very laudatory letters from Tehran, India and Bushire on handing over. Haworth’s pleasure at them was generous and showed him in a very good light.

‘Before I left two Directors of the Oil Company came out to see things for themselves, neither of them so able as Lloyd, but with large ideas within certain rather narrow limits. I could not get them to express any opinions on English or Indian politics—indeed they seemed surprised that I should be interested in Tariff Reform, on which Sir John Jackson, a very different type of man, was so keen, or the question of the Lords’ veto. They discussed jointly with Haworth and me a number of current questions and settled a few outstanding issues without, I am glad to say, referring either to the Minister or Cox, but taking our joint views as having the authority of them both. I wish they had come out sooner.’

‘(L., Feb. 7) I am in Bushire again, being taught to dance by the indefatigable Mrs. Cox and acting as her A.D.C. and

## PERSIA

Cox's Private Secretary. I see *The Guardian* declares that Professor E. G. Browne is perfectly familiar with Persian ways of thought because he has read, written and spoken Persian (in Cambridge) for thirty years and lived in Persia for one year.

'I know he has many Persian visitors; they are those who agree with him: those who disagree do not want or cannot afford to come to England. What should we say if a similar claim was made by a Persian after one year in England and thirty years reading and talking English? I fancy we should reply—he does not know the ideas and feelings of the mass of English people either in the country or in our cities, nor of the ruling class; and be inclined to jest. There is no trait peculiar to the Persian mind that may not be found all over the world. The Persian is the product of a very ancient civilization, of several successive religious systems, of a climate which varies as greatly from South to North as from Sicily to the Baltic. Persia is inhabited, like the United Kingdom, by four races—Turks, Arabs, Kurds and Persians proper, not to mention some Baluchis and Afghans and Christian Assyrians. They have no common mind or common environment; the soil is not rich, the climate harsh, the distances great. The limits of change and real progress are narrow.

'The main matters under discussion at the moment turn upon our relations with the Shaikh of Mohammerah to whom, as *The Times* says in a leading article on Jan. 20, "we have given promises of British goodwill and protection" always provided that he remains a Persian subject and comports himself as he should in that respect, on the understanding again that the Central Government in Tehran do not try to undermine his customary and hereditary rights or to despoil him of his property.

'Persian Nationalists are inclined to be antagonistic to all non-Persian minorities in Persia, except the Turkish-speaking element which predominates in N. Persia. They dislike Arabs, as such; they dislike Kurds, as such and because they are Sunnis; they dislike the Assyrians of Urmi because they are Christians, the Parsees because they are not Moslems, the

## RAILWAYS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Baluchis as such, the Afghan tribes on the eastern border and the Kashkai in SW. Persia, the Bakhtiari and Lurs of Luristan and Pusht-i-Kuh because they are to some extent independent of the Central Government. There should be some unifying force, but it is not on the horizon, and if it is at the expense of the traditional usages and customs of these linguistic and racial minorities it will be dearly bought.

‘I see many references in *The Times* and the reviews to the problem of Railways in the Middle East, from Constantinople via Baghdad to the Persian Gulf, from Baghdad across Persia to India, from Russia to India, from the Persian Gulf to Tehran, from the Black Sea to Tehran, &c. They are all “political” lines, not one of them will ever pay; whatever the promoters may say now not one will be built without a guarantee. It is a diplomatic game in which Russia and Germany are playing the leading part: the Turks and Persians at heart prefer to have no railway rather than one not under their control. Our concern is to see that our strategic interests in India are safeguarded, i.e. the termini on the Persian Gulf should be under our control or influence and the railways if built should serve to assist British and Indian trade as well as that of European Powers and Russia. Willcocks is keen on a Damascus-Palmyra-Baghdad line which he says would pay without a guarantee; his chief engineer prefers the Aleppo-Hit-Baghdad alignment down the Euphrates; the Turks want one via Mosul and Kerkuk, and so on. If they all had their way all these countries would have to be taxed double to pay interest and sinking fund on the cost of construction and probably a deficit on maintenance as well.

‘This however is not my affair, I am glad to say; I am required to see whether a line can be built from Mohammerah or Khor Musa to Burujird and Hamadan and if so by what route and, very roughly, at what cost.

‘For the last month I have been studying all the official papers on these subjects and helping Cox to get his own views into shape. He has shown his usual foresight, for he has been pressing for years past upon a reluctant Government

#### LEAVING MOHAMMERAH

the need for safeguarding our position at this end of all these lines by various quite indirect means which, at the time he wrote, would have aroused no opposition and would have cost little or nothing. But as generally happens, with us, Whitehall is afraid of Parliament and unwilling to act until the eleventh hour; then, when the difficulty is much greater, public apprehension is aroused, and we do, at immense cost and with much friction, what we might have done inexpensively and unobtrusively years ago.'

Early in March I conducted Sunday service for the last time at the Consulate and next morning left by road for Dizful with suitable presents for those who should befriend me, including a number of well-written manuscript Qur'āns, and with all available data regarding Luristan, including Rawlinson's Report of 1844 on the Dizful-Khurramabad road via Qilab and Kuh-i-Mungerrah and Kuh-i-Gird. I also took letters of recommendation from Shaikh Khaz'al to the Wali of Pusht-i-Kuh, Nazar Ali Khan, Fazil, Hasan, and Sartip (Tipu) Khan, all of the Sagwand, and several Arab Shaikhs along the Diz River including Haidar of the Al Kathia Saiyid Na'amah and Alwan Fa'ail, Sohrab Khan, and Allah Karam Khan.

Haḡī Rais, who had prepared them, favoured me with a vivid, libellous, and accurate word-picture of the true character of each man; the Shaikh bade me an affectionate farewell and attached to me a young Arab of good family whose conversation made the long marches seem short. Rahwali the first day, Qajariyah the second, Aminiyaḡ (opposite Ahwaz) the third. Here I met Saiyid Na'amah, Saif us Sadat, a rebel in the time of Shaikh Miz'al, Khaz'al's father, but now a bulwark of order against the Bani Turuf Khasrij and Bani Lam. He owes his title, 'Sword of the Saiyids', to the influence of Shaikh Khaz'al with a previous Governor-General.

After a day spent at Aminiyaḡ 'to rest the animals'



## SHUSHAN THE PALACE

(it being the head muleteer's home) we started again on our journey. Yeldani was the first stop

'near the immense mound of Jajish or Jijash, which may well hide ruins as extensive as those of Shushan the Palace. There are many ancient canals in this area; indeed on the Shaur alone are remains of twenty stone dams, it is said; there are also many spots reputed to be sacred, and several battle sites. One of them, Ali-bin-Ridha, a white dome on a low broad-backed hill, is a landmark for miles around. All the tribes about here wore the shapeless blue *aba* or cloak which from the fifteenth century onwards dominated these parts.

'On the second day I passed many more great mounds, notably Tul Raiyyash, and a succession of ancient Lur Shrines in good preservation'

and camped with Shaikh Haidar. On the third day I reached Shushan the Palace.

'(Mar. 21) This is New Year's Day and this the ideal place to celebrate it. I was delighted to receive a paternal letter of farewell from Cox, ending thus: "Best of luck, my dear boy; I hope all will turn out well. Write as often as you can"; and in the same bag equally affectionate letters from Col. and Mrs. Brander and from Capt. Lorimer, whose exceedingly pleasant bride I met at Bushire. These are worth much more to me than official eulogies. I have been as lucky in my official superiors as in my parents, for apart from these no one could have been kinder to me when I was with the Wiltshires than Col. Beatson, nor could I have had a better Company Commander than Maj. Peterson.

'I am staying here with two Frenchmen who are superintending *les fouilles*—[the excavations]—Mecquenem, chief assistant to de Morgan, and Monsieur Pezard, an archaeologist. They have a marvellous cellar, full of the products of Felix Potin, and excellent wine. The Château they have built is roomy and dry—a great boon to-day, for one storm after another has swept down and I have been soaked to the skin three times in as many days on the way here. Apart from this, travelling at this time of year is pure joy. There is grass

## VIEW FROM THE CHÂTEAU

everywhere for the animals, who revel in it; while they are at grass they cannot eat barley, so our marches must be short. Everything is green; milk and buttermilk and curds, butter and cheese and eggs are cheap or to be had free. My men are in high spirits, singing Persian love songs and poetry about the glories of spring as they ride, and again round the fire at night when they liken the little valleys to the cleft between the rounded breasts of their beloved, the fresh springs to their lady's eyes and some flowery hollow in the open plain to her navel, and so on. The crops will be good this year; the lambing season was very good (many sheep round here lamb twice a year). The prospect of full bellies for man and beast for a whole year makes everyone cheerful and ready to forget the Constitution and all the anarchy it entails. Food is so cheap that the Oil Company must, paradoxically, pay higher wages to get people to work at all. Men's needs are few and they are "lazy"—in other words their standard of living includes a large element of leisure, and who shall blame them?

'The view from the Château must be one of the finest in Persia. South lie rolling gravel hills covered with black tents and flocks of sheep and goats, and a maze of wheat and rice fields, as fertile as in the days of Ahasuerus and long before him, lying between the jungle of willow and other trees and oleander bushes on either bank of the broad, shallow Diz on the east and the deeper and narrower Karkhah on the west. Herds of cattle and buffaloes, watched by tiny children, are grazing here. Both rivers are in full flood carrying down immense volumes of terra-cotta silt. On the night I left Ahwaz I camped near the Karun and heard noises like artillery fire caused by the fall of great masses of soil, undercut by the river, falling suddenly into the stream.

'The storks are beginning to build their nests; blacklegged partridge and *sisi* are no longer in flights or flocks, but in pairs. Arabs bring me curlews' eggs, as popular a dish here as at home.

'On the western horizon is the great whale-back mass of limestone which will lie to the south of my track up the Karkhah valley. To the east are gravelly hills and an irrigated plain dotted with villages, between the Diz and Karun.

### HAGGLING WITH LUR CHIEFS

'To the north, range after range of steep mountains in section north to south like the teeth of a saw. Through them, eight or more ranges in all, the Diz has cut its way by a series of magnificent gorges. Ranking, my colleague at Ahwaz, holds that the proper route is past Qilab up the Diz gorge. This seems to be far too expensive to construct, though the gradients would be low. There would be a vast amount of tunnelling and heavy bridging. Such a railway could never earn dividends.'

From March 23rd to Easter Sunday, March 26th, I remained at Shush, haggling with Lur chiefs while my Indian surveyors made maps. I received much confusing advice; some urged me to deal direct with the Dirakwand, others to approach them through the Sagwand. The best advice came from an Arab, Mackenzie-ibn-Mushattal (named after Mr. Mackenzie of Gray Mackenzie & Co.), who told me that the ideal intermediary was Mulla Ma Taki Dirakwandi (= Mirza Muhammad Taqi), an old man who had real influence with all the tribes and particularly with his own.

He came to see me on March 27th. He gave his age as 75, but as he had an accurate recollection of Col. Rawlinson's journey in 1844 he must have been older. Indeed he claimed he was already a young man then. He was thin, white-haired, his face deeply furrowed, but his teeth and eyesight were perfect and his fund of stories inexhaustible. He had wanted to see me on March 24th but

'I refused, saying it was a day of mourning (*gatl*), being Good Friday, and I could do no business till after Easter. On Easter Monday I boldly entered the lion's jaws and pitched my tent with the Sagwands at Sanja'r. My hosts were Fazil Khan Ikhani, black-bearded, cross-eyed, morose, a typical Lur, and Hasan Khan Ilbegi, a younger man and much more genial outwardly but not more trustworthy; near by was Sartip Khan, much more of a Persian and a man of the world than either of them.'

## IRRIGATION

I was courteously received and well fed; and my notebooks at this period are full of detailed accounts of local land revenue, crops grown, ownership of various tracts, tribal rights, &c. If, as then seemed possible, the A.P.O.C. should bore for oil at Qilab such data would be of great value.

Sadiq Khan, Hasan Khan's son, an ingenuous youth, was constantly in attendance on me. I found him irksome but ready to talk, and he had so many questions to ask me that he could not refuse to answer mine. I was wearing Lur clothes—so as not to be conspicuous: he advised me to wear a green sash, the mark of a Saiyid, as it might save me from violence! I declined thus to save my skin at the expense of my self-respect. One day we rode into the hills bordering on the Karkhah and shot an ibex. I sent it as a present to my French friends at Shush, whom I felt sure would be glad of a change. We also visited the site of an old bridge across the Karkhah, just below which several canals take off.

'This country is evidently easy to irrigate and would be extremely fertile but the obstacles are many. The land is in communal ownership and a re-designed system of agriculture would benefit one tribe and community at the expense of another. It is harder to deal with communities than individuals. The Government is an alien Government, i.e. of Tehrani Persians: if their authority was supreme here they would get all the revenue they could and spend it elsewhere. Irrigation works need organization, honesty and steady outgoings on maintenance. None of these are to be expected in Persia.'

In subsequent days talks followed with the tribal chiefs of the Baharwand and Qalawand with Meshedi Iwaz, my mulcteer, with Shaikh Hadi, brother of our good Dizful agent Majd ul Islam, with Agha Rahim, a Bakhtiari agent of the Khani, Saiyid Barra, and Abbas Agha, who leased the Hasanabad lands from Nizam es Saltaneh (a

## GOVERNORS OF LURISTAN

former Governor-General). They were all afraid of the redoubtable Bairanwand tribe who had no representatives near, lived on the main range south of the Karkhah, owned allegiance to no single chief, and were expert thieves. I might also have some trouble with the Judeki and even the Papi.

Mulla Ma Taqi had a remarkable memory: he gave me a list of all the Governors of Luristan for nearly a century:<sup>1</sup> some were princes of the blood Royal, others were Lur chiefs; some were young, some old; some stayed six months, others six years; some hanged robber chiefs and tortured malefactors; some brought armies and some bought peace at a price. But Luristan to-day was as bad as at any time in his life: nothing would improve it but trade—the opening of the road or the building of a railway. But that would mean domination by the Central Government, who had always treated the tribes with cruelty and contumely. In the end the Government would weaken; the tribes would take their revenge. Ten times he had seen this happen. The road was dotted with ruined forts; the hill-sides strewn with graves—not a cheerful prospect for my schemes.

I did not, however, give up hope. An immediate arrangement for the journey to Khurramabad was impossible; there was no one person or group of persons on the spot on whom I could rely. The more I pressed, the higher the price they asked. If I gave way, other tribes would insist on taking part in the racket. I decided

<sup>1</sup> Ihtisham ud Dauleh  
Farhad Mirza  
Zia ul Mulk  
Muizz ud Dauleh  
Hishmat ud Dauleh I  
" " II (nephew of I)  
Ihtisham ud Saltaneh  
Zia ud Dauleh  
Imad ud Dauleh  
Hisam ud Saltaneh

Muzaffar ul Mulk (*agent of Zill-ud-Sultan*)  
'Ain ud Dauleh  
Salar ud Dauleh  
Farman Farma  
Sardar Mukarram  
Muntasir ud Dauleh  
Sardar Firuz  
Amir Afghan

## QILAB

to spend three weeks or so making short trips to places on the edge of Luristan proper, so as to familiarize the population with my intentions and to show them that

(1) I was not afraid of them and

(2) I would 'pay my way' but not with undue liberality.

One trip was to Qilab via Karaharr (20 miles), not far from a broken bridge of great antiquity over the Bala Rud. I here met an aged man, Kadkhuda Qandi, who remembered Rawlinson, the lame *Elchi* (Ambassador), when he went to Khurramabad via Qilab; and another who remembered Mackenzie, a British merchant (a partner of Lord Incheape in early days), who travelled this road. I climbed to the top of Wan Kuh where I was told Shapur went, in Sassanian times when he became *yaghi* or an outlaw, and I began my map in earnest. Next day I visited Qilab, at the foot of a steeply tilted ridge of limestone some 2,000 feet high through which the Diz runs at right angles in a magnificent gorge. I saw, and reported upon, the oil springs there: of the Valley of the Diz itself I could gather little. I was assured that no living man had ever seen the whole of it. The valleys lying between the ridges, through which the river cuts almost at right angles, were occupied in summer by different tribes who were not on speaking terms. There was not even a goat-track up the gorge, even when the stream was at its lowest, for it ran for miles between vertical cliffs. A few men *might* float down from Burujird on skins, but if seen they would certainly be shot.

After a week or so of hunting expeditions, during which I made good use of my plane table, my plans began to mature. Three chiefs (Kadkhudas) of the Qalawand—Fazil, Zaki, and Hazir Beg—agreed to convey me in safety to Khurramabad for about £50 in all, the Ikhani and Ilbegi of the Sagwand being underwriters and guarantors. My best manuscript Quran was pro-

#### A PAYING GUEST

duced, the document written out in rough script with a fine reed pen and Indian ink, upon the fly-leaf, with great ceremony. The seals of the three signatories were produced from a silk purse and affixed by the Mulla who had engrossed the deed: each signatory kissed the Quran in turn, and placing his right hand upon it swore *ba haq-i-in-qala m-ullah majid*—‘by the faith of the glorious word of God’, to abide by the letter and spirit of the bond. From me no document was required: payment was to be made in Khurramabad ‘in good current silver coin’ in addition to ‘one sack of sugar’, for by ancient custom, it seemed, an agreement for monetary payment alone was invalid.

The days passed, from my point of view, not unpleasantly. The Kadkhudas and Khans took it in turns to play the part of host to me as a ‘paying guest’. I ate seated Persian fashion on a carpet as they did, I rode out with them or their young sons at dawn, talking interminably of horses, rifles, pistols, and greyhounds; they told me stories of border raids and counter raids, of sheep and cattle driven from distant places, across rivers and up little-known tracks, with all the pride of business men in England describing successful business deals. Sometimes a spice of romance was added by the acquisition of a bride ‘by capture’. One very handsome tall youth of 23 had long desired the hand of the daughter of a Kadkhuda of a rival and not always unfriendly tribe, who asked too high a price. One day, with a dozen of his father’s retainers, the youth made a raid upon the camp of his future father-in-law during the absence of all the able-bodied men, who were busy repelling a foray of Khasrij Arabs. He seized his bride, put her across his saddle bow and, guarded by his henchmen, rode away with her amid the piercing screams of her mother, her sisters, and the maidservants. No blood was shed, and he left in the tent a bag of money containing

## MARRIAGE BY CAPTURE

what he regarded as a fair price for her. If she returned to her father, he would have to return the money.

There was much talk of war between the two tribes, but public opinion was in his favour: it was a 'good match'; such a marriage would help to keep the peace between the two tribes concerned. It was felt that her father had asked too much. The youth treated her well: he was regarded as a bit of a hero among men, and she a heroine among women. Her father-in-law was delighted and gave her many gold pieces and a flock of young goats. That was eight months ago: all was now forgiven and he was about to become a father. She was the joy of his life; the embodiment of female virtue and beauty, and also good at making fine carpets. She cooked well and knew how to handle maid-servants and herdsmen. She milked the sheep and goats, and her dairy produce and wool and hair fetched a good price. He would have paid ten times as much for her had he been able to afford it.

I saw her later: her figure and face were worthy of his ardour and her cooking and carpets of my admiration. I was her guest three years later: she showed me her two children and said proudly that a third was coming. Could I give her a medicine to ensure that the third would be a girl?—she had two boys already.

The outstanding source of discussion at this period in SW. Persia was resentment among Lurs and Arabs alike against the Bakhtiari Khans, who appeared to aim at replacing the Qajar dynasty. To the mild and weak rule of the latter no one seriously objected: the prospect of being governed by men whose forefathers were petty tribal leaders was intolerable and the Shaikh of Mohammerah, Saulat ud Dauleh, the Qashqai chief, the Wali of Pusht-i-Kuh, and others were busy scheming to prevent the emergence of the Bakhtiari as the predominant element in Tehran. This, however, was, of course, not my affair and I merely recorded it without comment.



## A NERVOUS ESCORT

On April 20th all my plans were upset by a successful attack on the Baharwand by the Qalawand—my intended escort. I was advised by the Sagwand chiefs to transfer my effects to the former, and did so. Women leaving Dizful for their weekly picnic and bathe in the river were robbed of all they possessed and stripped naked by Lurs; and fresh raids across the river added to the prevailing insecurity. There was intermittent firing all night round my camp and several attempts made to steal my horses and mules, probably in order to deter me from going. I was unmoved, and left Dizful (on 25th), transferring my camp to the old barracks or Kushk on the right bank. Then, on successive days to Taq-i-Awazi, Qaleh Raza whence I climbed a 4,500 ft. hill (Chinara) and drew maps during a three days' halt made miserable by heavy rain. I was struck by the nervousness of the escort I had to take up this steep limestone face: from the moment they left camp they were clearly afraid of being attacked. Two of them were accidentally separated from us, lost their way, and reappeared half a mile from us. Panic ensued, each party thinking the other to be a hostile gang bent on cutting off their retreat or barring their passage. I allayed their fears by insisting on a count. I worked on my maps, and took careful geological notes.

On May 2nd we moved on to Tirador and on May 3rd to Qafilajah. Near Tirador the Zal River (named after Rustam's father) breaks through the Chinara or Kialan range in a deep gorge, passable on foot all the year round and by mules when the water is low. At Qafilajah we had to halt for a day, to bury a man killed in a tribal dispute. I watched the ceremony. The dead man's toes were tied together; the body was buried, feet towards Mecca, in a shallow grave, not naked or in a shroud, but in the blood-stained shirt in which he had met his death. A Mullah read prayers as six young men carried the body on a rough bier shoulder high to the grave, dug in a

### LEAPING A GORGE

cemetery so old that some of the graves were, by their orientation, apparently pre-Islamic. The men were solemn and sad; the women wailed aloud; some near relatives tore at their hair and rent their tattered garments. The cries of the man's children were dreadful—so painfully genuine. His death meant that little was left for them but slavery within the tribe.

On May 5th we halted near Pul-i-Tang, where the Karkhah River, here called the Saidmarrah, runs in a deep gorge so narrow at the top that it is spanned by a single arch. Close by, only 12 or 15 feet separated two projecting rocks, one on either side. The tribal chiefs with me told me that the young men of the tribe often jumped rifle in hand across the stream which ran, deep and silent, 50 feet below. 'If they do it, so can I,' I replied; 'let me see them do it and I will follow.' They took it as a challenge and called for volunteers; none came forward. Anxious to prove my mettle I declared that I would do it myself, even if they could find no man to follow me. They begged me to do no such thing—it would be a terrible thing for them if I should miss my footing. I had no fears, for I wore the Persian *giva*h or cloth shoe. I took a short run and leapt across the chasm. It was certainly worth doing, for the fame of it preceded me to Burujird, where the chasm was later described as at least 30 yards across!

I here received my first post from home for six weeks and wrote thus to my mother:

'I am enjoying life to the full and doing what I set out to do, including much survey work. The tribe with its flocks and herds only moves 30 miles or so a week, which suits me well, as I have time to climb a mountain before we leave one camp and after we reach the next. I am fairly fluent now in the Lur dialect and can converse freely on what interests them—and me. They are helpful, but uncouth and overbearing, regarding themselves, as good Moslems, naturally

## THE OUTSIDE WORLD

superior to pale-faced Christians, though I am tanned to as deep a shade of brown as they, and have a solid black beard. I should find life easier if I could get away from them but from dawn till almost midnight they are with me in relays. My food is just what they eat, neither more nor less: I sleep always on the ground, as this is a safeguard against being shot as one lies in a bed, and against robbers. I can sense, as I lie on the ground, even a dog prowling round the tent.

'I miss your letters, I miss *The Times*: without some news of the outside world one is liable to become self-centred, though in fact the day's work from dawn to dusk, and conversation with relays of hosts gives me little leisure to read anything, and I seldom even light a candle, preferring to do my writing and map drafting at early dawn so soon as there is enough light, for a light attracts women and children—and sometimes stray shots.

'But I have had time to read Glazebrook's *Isaiah* and Mona's novel which you sent me. I marvel at her versatility. The last things I read of hers were on Industrial Accidents, and Casual Employment of Dockers in West Ham. If I rate the last two higher than the novel, despite the qualities of imagination and literary grace which it reveals, it is because I am a writer of reports by trade. A bibliography of the Wilson family (from Jonathan onwards) would show a surprising versatility perhaps because, as Grace once said, "the Wilson family have always wanted to see what was on the other side of the hill". I remind myself of that every day as I toil up the torrid limestone slopes of these waterless mountains.

'I am so glad you asked Col. and Mrs. Brander to stay. One of the disadvantages of my way of life is that the longer I stay here the fewer friends I have: I lose touch, necessarily, with my Army friends, and I make few new ones. Society, of either sex, is greatly restricted. This must be my excuse for being rather extravagant over wedding presents, just to remind them that they are in my mind even if I am beyond their horizon.

'As I sat on the hillside below my camp last night I witnessed at close quarters a little ceremony which must date

## WOMEN IN ISLAM

back to pre-Islamic, perhaps to Sumerian times. Half a score of young women came in single file along the rough path to a *pir* or sacred place, marked only by a few graves, some pre-Islamic, and a great pile of small stones. Here they formed a line, facing the Kuh-i-Shahzada Ahmad, which stood out massive and clear-cut against the light of the moon which was about to rise behind it. Two of them lit little oil lamps and placed them upon the ground in front of the party. They waited for a space; then, as the moon rose above the crest of the hill, one of them began to pray aloud

“O Shahzada Ahmad, O Shahzada Ahmad, our guide and defender: answer our prayers, protect our men, give health to our children, guard our flocks and make them fruitful”

and much else to the same effect. Their prayers died down; they waited in silence till the last of the lamps flickered and went out; then, with a final deep obeisance they returned by the same path, murmuring prayers as they went. Some minutes later one woman came alone: she too lighted a lamp and prayed aloud. One petition only could I understand:

“May my next be a boy.”

‘There is no place in Islam for women in public prayer: nowhere else in Persia or Arabia did I in later years witness or hear of such a ceremony; but I was told several days later by one of the tribal chiefs that the women of several Lur tribes had such a custom, and it had his approval.

‘On May 7 we crossed the western end of the Kialan Mountain to Jaidar: on the way thither I climbed 2,500 feet to the top of Do Furush, accompanied by one man who carried my plane table. I reached the summit long before he did and was amply rewarded. I saw a great Lammergier eagle swooping down again and again to within a few feet of the rock, with its claws lowered as if to strike. Coming up silently in my cloth *givahs* I peeped over a rock to see what quarry it was after and saw an ibex standing on guard over two kids. Down came the eagle again, wing feathers rustling like wind among leaves; the kids ran under their mother, who butted the eagle boldly with her horns. The moment the eagle had

## A COUNCIL OF WAR

passed the kids ran out and began to graze, only to take shelter again when the bird made another snatching dive at them. This was repeated three or four times at intervals of less than a minute; then it saw me and flew off.

Next day at Walmiyan, near Jaidar, news came that the Baharwand Mirs (who attacked Lorimer) had seized the next pass and barred the way against us: they demanded *rahdari*—road toll—to the amount I had promised my friends for the whole trip from Dizful to Khurraamabad.

To give way to them would be to ensure a repetition of such tactics at intervals of a few miles all the way to Burujird or Kermanshah. I formally refused to pay, or promise to pay anything, and held my hosts to their bond. We pushed on a few miles farther to Badamak, where a council of war was held. The Mirs had shown that they were in earnest by seizing some flocks of goats and sheep belonging to my friends. The possibility of a compromise was earnestly discussed; the Kurd Aliwand had joined us and we were now the stronger party—if they could be relied upon to fight with us. The greybeards took me into their confidence: they did not wish to fight, but would not give way to blackmail, or there would be no passage for them in future years. I was a good shot and had a good rifle: would I fight too? "Yes", I said, "gladly." "Ah, but that would be fatal," said another. "He would kill a man and start a blood feud and no foreigner coming up the road would be safe from vengeance.

*Pidar kushti, tukhm-i-khîn kashti*

*Pidar kushta, kai-bawad ashti*

By killing your father you sow seeds of malice

Having killed your father when will come reconciliation?

But you will pretend to fight?" "Very well," said I, "I will pretend."

"Then he might be killed", said a third, "and the British Government would demand our blood; and the tribe would be ruined—that would be worse still. He must not expose himself: that would be madness."

Thus they bandied words and balanced arguments till a man rushed into the tent with news that the Mirs had again

## THE FIGHT

seized a flock and had cruelly beaten his son, the little shepherd boy: a minute or two later came news that they had killed a man of the tribe. Women wailed, shouts of indignation came from outside the tent in which we sat. The leading greybeard, a man of great stature and fine presence, arose and swore a great oath. "*Ba haqq-i-Baba Buzurg*" (a famous saint whose shrine is west of the Kashgan River), "*ba haqq-i-in qalamullah majid*"—"By Baba Buzurg and by this holy Quran—and he placed his hand on the sacred book slung across his shoulder in a satchel—it shall be blood for blood and no more words. We will fall upon these dogs and sons of dogs, bastard spawn of dishonoured mothers: they shall remember this day." He jumped up and ran from the tent to the top of a mound where, with a resonant voice, he called upon every tribesman to go forward, and every shepherd boy to look to his flock and drive them out of harm's way. The tribesmen ran to their tents, where they cast down any superfluous garments they might have, and emerged, a moment later, lithe, barefooted, half-naked figures and, with extraordinary skill and speed, ran up the rocky slopes that lay between them and the enemy.

'They formed themselves into groups—each of which seemed to have a recognized leader, usually an older man, one of whom was pointed out to me as "a lion" who had killed twelve men. The fight began soon after midday. The total number engaged on either side was not more than 300 and by nightfall two or three men of the enemy had been killed or wounded. The flocks were collected close to our camp and after they had been milked were watched by shepherd boys, assisted by small fires, near which women had heaped quantities of dry thorns and long grass, which would blaze up instantly when thrown upon the embers. One of my hosts, Kadkhuda Baruni, took me with him to the top of the pass, which our men had seized shortly after firing began, and along the summit on either side. Two boys with us brought bread and dried cheese for the sentries who lay invisible under boulders or in crevices, listening rather than watching the slopes before them. At one point only—the head of a ravine—was there a piequet.

## A HISTORICAL PARALLEL

'At dawn there was more shooting and we learned that an enemy leader had just been killed and one of our young men mortally wounded. We had captured a large flock and four men: we had taken their rifles and felt coats, but not their lives. At midday firing ceased and I walked up to the top of a low hill, dominating the camp and perhaps 800 yards from the front line, to see what was happening. I raised my binoculars and focussed them on a section of the enemy line. Suddenly a cry was raised from our side "*Tilism daravurd*"—he has cast a spell (talisman) upon them—"let us go forward". I lowered my glasses. Up rushed Baruni, leaping from rock to rock, his *aba* (cloak) flowing in the wind. "Put up your arms again—do not lower them—hold the spell!" "My arms will tire," said I. "I will send men to uphold them," he replied and shouted to the camp for two men. Here was a tradition dating from the days of Joshua (*Exodus* xvii):

"Joshua fought with Amalek, and Moses and Aaron and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

"But Moses' hands were heavy; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

"And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword."

Fascinated by the historical parallel I let the men hold up my hands: our side cheered and went forward, leaping from boulder to boulder. A few long shots spattered the ground on which I stood. The grey-bearded shepherds on either side comforted me. "It matters not," said one, "the talisman is working." "The medicine has turned their hearts to water," said the other.

'An hour later the fight was over: on balance we had won, for our dead were three to their four: our captured sheep and goats three hundred head to their one hundred. Saiyids, reputed descendants of the Prophet, in blue turbans, headed by one who was also a *Haḡī* as shown by his green waistband,

#### TERMS OF AN ARMISTICE

went forward under a tattered flag of truce—the crescent moon and a single star above a scimitar pointing downwards and to the right, roughly cut out in white cloth upon a black ground, and known as the flag of Shahzada Ahmad. As they left the camp they began to chant from the Quran the opening verses of the *Sura* used at the Burial of the Dead. The warriors were silent for a moment: the hush was broken only by the bleating of unfed lambs and the wails of mourning women within the tents. The Kadkhudas collected near Baruni's tent and, led by him, said midday prayers. Then, in high spirits, sat down to a frugal meal of bread and curds, for nothing had been cooked: all saddle-bags had been packed in readiness for a move in case the fortunes of war should have gone against us. After appeasing their hunger the leaders, one and all, went to sleep and I followed their example. But not for long.

'A few hours later a small boy raced into the camp to announce a fresh onslaught. A few random shots were fired, but it turned out to be a group of Saiyids from the other side, advancing to meet ours. Our greybeards arose and began to discuss the terms of an armistice. The Mirs, our enemies, offered six mares and two rifles as blood money, but still demanded the right to take me to Khurramabad. The terms were indignantly rejected and the Mirs' party left, abusing me "*the farangi*"—the Frank—and my protectors and allies.

'Just before dark news came of an intended night attack upon us. At 9 p.m.—it was a full moon—a shot was fired: women screamed and some flocks of goats began to scatter. The panic soon died down: the shot had been fired by one of our side who had mistaken a returning patrol for an enemy band. The rest of the night passed without incident and the next two days (May 14 and 15) were spent in negotiations which were extended to cover all outstanding blood feuds and claims on both sides. The Mirzas of both sides, peaceable men skilled with the pen, sat by the chiefs and gave details of unsettled debits for the past two years or so. The proceedings were marked by a great show of cold courtesy: no harsh word was spoken, lest trouble should start afresh. Agreement



## BURIAL OF THE DEAD

was at length reached after some 20 hours of talk, during which I was an interested but silent listener. The Mirs were to hand over two mares, two mules, three rifles with ammunition, and two women of good family to be given in marriage to the sons of Baharwand leaders, as an earnest of future friendship. I was to remain with the Baharwand, but was to soften this blow to their enemies' hopes by a present to the losers of some £20—when I was safely in Khurramabad.

'I was to be free to make surveys and to go where I would, but never alone, lest I should be assaulted by some wandering band and make trouble for all Luristan. Another of my Qurans was called for, the agreement was endorsed upon the fly-leaf, sealed and kissed by each chief. Then they kissed each other, on either shoulder; peace was restored and the next day we moved forward to fresh pastures.

'The day after the battle I witnessed the burial of our dead: the ceremony lacked nothing of dignity or pathos. The burial ground, close to the camp, held the bodies of many men who had died thus in battle; some graves were marked by stone lions, roughly, almost grotesquely, cut from pieces of solid limestone. Others had a headstone on which was carved an invocation to "Ali, the patron saint of Shiahs", above crossed swords, to indicate a fighting man—"a mighty man of valour" as the Old Testament puts it—or a comb, double toothed for women, single toothed for men.

'The bodies were borne to the grave uncoffined on a rough bier, at a quick pace by young men, each shrouded by a single blue cotton garment such as the dead man had worn in life. The hands were folded across the breast, the big toes tied together with thread by a Saiyid. Behind the bier party came men and boys, but no women, though it was they who had laid out the bodies, washed them and wailed over them in the tents in which they had dwelt when alive. Shallow graves had been dug oriented towards Mecca: the body was placed therein, lying to the right and covered with earth, upon which heavy stones were heaped, against hyaenas and jackals. A Mulla who had led the procession, chanting the Quran, took his seat at the foot of the grave and, with the Quran on a portable bookstand before him, swaying his body,

## LUR WOMEN

droned it aloud for an hour or two. The women stood apart, *beating their breasts and wailing*: then they too left, for children must be fed, flocks milked, and meals prepared for the family.'

A week later, at another graveyard, I witnessed a mourning ceremony for tribal warriors who had fallen some two years previously. Men and women formed two groups.

'Two large black tents or tabernacles had been set up side by side, one for women on the left and one for men on the right hand. The men stood upon the right of their tent and the women upon the left of theirs, swinging their arms and bodies rhythmically to a sad melodious dirge. Other groups of men and women collected in the camp close by and moved towards their respective parties. As they approached, both parties faced each other, men to men and women to women, uttering words and phrases indicative of grief and beating their breasts violently with closed fists. When both groups had closed up they entered their respective tabernacles and, seated upon the ground, continued to chant a dirge. The proceedings were ceremonious; the women, clothed as always in black, and unveiled, marching shoulder to shoulder, left upon my mind an ineffaceable impression of dignity.'

This is perhaps the place to record a note which I wrote later upon Lur women:

'I have come to regard the wives and daughters of the tribesmen with whom I have been living with real admiration. Their powers of endurance are a perpetual source of wonder to me. They bear, quite literally, the burden of the day, and also heat and bitter cold, though far less well clad than their men. They bear, too, many children, unaided by any but their own kind, suckle them long, and carry them often for great distances. They and they alone milk the sheep and goats, prepare food, weave carpets and tent cloth, saddle-bags and much else. They help to load and unload the pack animals, but go afoot oftener than ride. Without a wife a man is as

## THE TRIBAL SETTLEMENT

helpless and useless as half a pair of anything else—and knows it.'

Nearly a fortnight later, just before I entered Khurramabad, I was present at the final stages of the tribal settlement. Mares, mules, and rifles had been handed over, after much dispute as to quality, but the question of brides had still to be adjusted.

'The greybeards sat in their long tent and the first of the two women was brought before them, a girl of some eighteen years, shapely, comely with fearless eyes, the daughter of a black-bearded Mir of fierce mien who sat in the Assembly, eyeing her with pride. Opposite him sat the prospective bridegroom, nervously fingering his robe; he was the son of one of my hosts, who sat on his left. The presiding Saiyid extolled his virtues and those of his father and ancestors, whose lineage he traced through ten generations or so to the eponymous head of the tribe. He had a good tent, fine herds of sheep and goats; his father had given him a mule and half a mare; he was an ideal match. The Mirs' delegate said as much and more of the girl's ancestry and of her noble father, a lion in battle, a statesman in counsel, a lamb in society, devout in religious practices, esteemed in the market place, a travelled man who had visited many shrines, including Karbala and Najaf, Meshed and Qum. The assembly listened with obvious enjoyment to their eloquence, feeling themselves to be vicariously ennobled by their tributes. The contrast between these proceedings and the fierce outbursts which marked the armistice negotiations a fortnight earlier was impressive. The speeches were formal, and not, perhaps, wholly sincere, but they did much to smooth the path of the peacemakers.

'The girl's father then spoke, in measured tones. His daughter had never lacked handmaids; she had never gone afoot; she had never ridden save upon a fine mare; not for her was the drudgery of milking cattle; she made carpets such as only her mother could make, carpets for which the merchants competed eagerly. She was a *mullah*—could read

## TWO MARRIAGES ARRANGED

a little and write well. She could keep accounts and was more than a match for the hucksters of the bazaar. She must have better pots and pans, quilts and pillows, than her future husband could at present offer.

'The youth's father took up the challenge: *his* tent lacked nothing; he would see to it that the bride's establishment was furnished as well as his own. She would be his especial care and if she lacked a maid, he would see to it that one was forthcoming. After an hour of such parleyings, conducted with great courtesy, I helped both parties to reach agreement by myself presenting a wedding gift to the bride of a pair of silver dessert spoons and £2 in cash. "*Afrin bar tu, Afrin bar tu, Allah tul taraka*"—"Well done. God give you luck"—cried the assembly. The girl withdrew; a few hours later she was escorted with songs to the bridegroom's tent, while the bride's friends fired a salvo and the women uttered shrill cries of joy and welcome.

'The case of the second bride was less spectacular—she had been recently widowed and had two small children. The intended bridegroom was an older man, and a widower, with children already able to play useful parts in life, being above ten years old. Her praises and also those of her intended spouse were again the theme of the Saiyids, but she could speak for herself. Standing before us, she spoke as to her equals. She was the daughter and grand-daughter of a chief with great warriors—lion-men—to her ancestry. Her dead husband was honoured by his friends and feared by his enemies. She, too, could read and write; she too made carpets without price and dyed wool with skill; her fingers lacked no cunning. Would her husband provide her with household goods suited to her station and his? Assurances were given, and she too was satisfied and, with less rejoicing but not less ceremony . . .'

I may conveniently insert here an extract from my diary some six months later describing a Lur wedding which I witnessed in the *garmsir* or warm country (as opposed to the *sardsir* or cold country to which tribes return in the spring).

## A LUR WEDDING

'The 13th day of the lunar month is in universal use here except for taxation and agricultural operations and is accounted very propitious. The marriage settlement had already been drawn up and sealed by elders. It is customary to procure also the seal of some high religious dignitary in a city who, for a reasonable fee, keeps a copy of the document in his register. All matrimonial causes are dealt with in religious courts, as formerly in England, and if the original document is lost the copy in the register is admissible as evidence. The sealing of this document by elders in the presence of a *mulla*—a religious official—constitutes the marriage ceremony. There is no ring—only a declaration on both sides of willingness to cohabit. This takes place almost in private.

'What follows is the public part of the ceremony. At dusk or soon after the married couple are taken, with music, song and dance to a tent, decorated with borrowed carpets and hung with satins and silks, scarves and ribbons. In the centre is the marriage bed. The pair enter. The tent door is closed and two young men carrying swords guard it all night for three nights. The marriage is invariably consummated here, and at once, and married women are called in the morning to declare the fact and to testify *ex post facto* to the bride's virginity when married.

'Rejoicings follow during the next few days, beginning with a stick-dance, performed by men. This dance is said by Lord Curzon in his classic book on Persia to resemble and perhaps be derived from ancient Greek dances. Two men, each armed with a pair of long, heavy sticks, enter a ring; drum and horn begin to play a rhythmical tune keeping time with which one attacks the other, who defends himself. The first straight, hard blow with a stick decides the issue of each round.<sup>1</sup> Then the attacker becomes the defender.

'Afterwards the women begin to dance, barefoot, and in brightly coloured apparel, unveiled, like all tribeswomen, with old silver and gold coins on the heads like tiaras and sometimes round their necks and wrists. In each hand they hold a

<sup>1</sup> It is well illustrated by Merian Cooper in his book *Grass* (1926, Putnam's), one of the best books ever written on Persia.

### PRE-ISLAMIC REMAINS

coloured silk handkerchief. They, too, dance to music in a plaintive minor key, slowly and rhythmically, with solemn faces, breaking into smiles and laughter only after the dance is over; these take place usually round a cairn of stones which must have seen such dances several times a year, perhaps for thousands of years. At night a wood fire is built on the top of the cairn and dancing, varied with singing, goes on till midnight. But after dusk the stick-dance becomes more animated. Two or three pairs of men are in combat simultaneously, the defender keeping within the light of the fire, the attacker lurking in the dark and running in when he can to strike a blow.

‘When the parents of the bridegroom are well-to-do all present get free food at midday and again at dusk.’

The remaining stages of my journey were less eventful but full of interest. Three miles before reaching our camp at Chimashk I saw, high up a cliff, some cave-dwellings in three stories, eight or ten rooms in all, cut out of the hard limestone. There were traces of stairs and of drains, but no inscriptions. They were clearly of extreme antiquity, certainly pre-Islamic, and almost certainly pre-Sassanian. In this region, as everywhere else in SW. Persia, are remains of paved roads, probably of Sassanian construction; but here and there may be seen remains of the yet more ancient tracks upon which the Sassanian road builders superimposed their own handiwork. The old tracks zigzagged by somewhat steeper gradients up the same hill-side; the Sassanian paved road is often built across limestone slabs deeply furrowed for centuries by the feet of flocks and pack-animals which must have used them before the Sassanian road was built; yet these furrows are but a continuation of a road roughly graded and cut into the hill-side. Here and there, too, an observant eye may see, often running across the Sassanian road but never across the older track, the foundations of early buildings, consisting uniformly of large uncut

## FRESH ATTEMPTS AT BLACKMAIL

boulders, as heavy as a man can lift, laid on a rectangular plan. The upper surfaces are heavily furrowed and pitted by exposure to the rain of thousands of years, the lower surfaces as fresh as when first laid.

My mapping was only once interrupted when after a long climb to well above snow level—some 8,000 feet—I found that my muleteer had been set upon by two Mirs and his throat incised by way of a threat, with the warning that the cut, slowly made with a blunt knife, would go deeper next time unless I paid more heavily for the right to cross these barren hills. The last stage across the Khurramabad to the town was preceded by fresh attempts at blackmail, which I successfully resisted. The strain on my factotum, Mirza Daud, during the journey had been great; he had played a man's part, but now, with the goal in sight, his heart failed him and he urged compromise, which I refused to consider, for I hoped to come to this country again. If I gave way now I could never return, and my successor's path would be even more thorny than mine had been. I roundly upbraided my hosts, declaring that they might cut my throat and take my poor belongings but not a penny would I pay, or promise, beyond what was in the bond. The dispute waxed loud and lasted long; some counselled, others deprecated, violence. At length they agreed to forgo further claims. I put on my best (Persian) clothes; my servants donned their best frock-coats; we threw a pair of handsome borrowed carpets over the backs of the two mules which bore my camp kit, and set off across the plain. The Kadkhudas with me were now all smiles and compliments; they made their mounts caracole on either side of mine, they played at *Kai-Kash*, galloping at full speed, and aiming their rifles backwards Parthian fashion at a rock or stone, which they often hit, and vowing undying friendship.

Five miles outside the town the British Consular Agent,

## KHURRAMABAD

Mirza Ali Akbar, met me; two miles farther on the Governor of the town—known as the Diwan Begi—awaited me with a large mounted escort. My hosts were suspicious, and would not approach the townsmen until the Agent had arranged and vouched for a temporary truce between tribe and town which would enable them to enter the town, which turned out to receive us, thronging the gates and crowding the narrow streets, while my thankful henchmen Mirza Daud and Nabi distributed largesse to blind and maimed beggars at my expense, receiving in return the conventional assurance that God would regard their liberality as an act of merit and *radd-i-muzālim*, atonement for tyranny.

Throughout my stay I was the guest of the Diwan Begi in a summer-house overlooking a fine Persian garden, well planted with cypresses and pomegranate trees, with running water and stone tanks round which we sat daily to drink tea and talk politics. The keynote of every conversation was the prevailing anarchy: trade was bad, though harvests were good. The roads were so insecure that wheat and barley could not be sold for consumption elsewhere. The Shaikh's Government in past years had been bad enough, but was never quite hopeless; from the *majlis* they could hope nothing. It was representative only of the townfolk, mainly from the principal cities. The tribesmen had no voice but had other means of exerting influence; the cultivators had no voice at all and whatever taxes might be levied would fall mainly upon them. There was no army, no police, no justice. The Shah might still recover his position if he had wisdom or wise counsellors—but he lacked both.

To my father I wrote on May 24th, the day after reaching Khurramabad:

‘I have reached this, the first stage of my journey, with the same half-ashamed feeling of relief that I used to experience as a small boy in the train at the end of a long tunnel in



## WEST OF THE KASHGAN

strange company. All around me is desolation—empty villages, deserted gardens, broken canals, ruined by nomads including those with whom I have travelled, whose unrestrained aptitude for pillage has benefited them not at all. They were never poorer. The Persian is paying a heavy price for the anarchy which some have created as a remedy for the tyranny which others practised; the poor are discovering that anarchy threatens their very existence. I think I earn my pay; the work has a spice of danger but is of absorbing interest. Maps and reports occupy every hour I can snatch from endless conversations with my hosts.

‘I am proud of the map, which covers much territory hitherto marked “unexplored”. My triangulation was only a mile out in a hundred—assuming Dizful and Khurramabad as marked on the maps to be correct. The Governor spares no pains to make me comfortable—in fact I am living luxuriously, if not *une vie de luxure*.’

Early in June I left Khurramabad to explore the almost completely unknown country west of the Kashgan, and to visit the leading chief, Nazar Ali Khan.

‘(D., June 1911) The Kashgan must from the very earliest times have been a boundary between different tribal groups, with different deities; the Diz was probably likewise a tribal boundary. Both are still recognized frontiers for certain purposes. West of the Kashgan men swear by Baba Buzurg—the ‘Great Father’, a pilgrimage to whose lofty shrine is a certain cure for sick men if they can reach it on foot. To the East as far as the Diz men invoke Shahzada Ahmad who, likewise, has his shrine on the summit of a great peak. In the Bakhtiari and Kuhgalu country and east of the Kashgan I have seen no “sacred groves”; west of the Kashgan they are a feature of the landscape. Here and there, at intervals of a day’s journey or so, one sees upon a hill-side devoid even of bushes a 50-acre patch of gnarled oaks, with a few young trees self-sown among them, the ground strewn with dead wood in a district where wood is extremely scarce and no fuel obtainable save dung or grass. These are, to the Dulfan Lur, *harám*—sacred, and no man or woman will touch the

## AN ENCOUNTER WITH TRIBESMEN

trees or even the dead wood. Close by one such grove on a hill-top or "high place" I saw a great stone, red with the fresh blood of sacrificed goats and sheep brought there by men and women with a vow to make and a favour to ask of Baba Buzurg, the flesh being afterwards given to Saiyids or to the poor—a pre-Islamic rite reminiscent of Baal worship.

'From one camp, 80 miles west of Khurramabad, I saw a light just below a hill-top. I was told that it was the sacred fire which the Dulfan Lur keep alight so long as they are camped in this region, to keep away sickness from man and beast—a relic of fire-worship. Great mounds in the plain show that it once supported a resident, not nomadic, population, and from the heights the eye can descry faint tracks unused for centuries, leading from mound to mound, and from the mounds to the existing passes. The presence on the line of such tracks of "pirs"—shrines now devoted to some Islamic saint—suggests that these also date from pre-Islamic times.'

'(L., June 1911) I had an unpleasant encounter with tribesmen on my way to Nazar Ali Khan's camp. I had to pass through Chigini territory; this tribe, which owes no allegiance to him or to anyone else, has no recognized leaders. The headmen of two out of six sections were with me and, in return for my money, assured me that I should have no trouble on the way. Once across the Kashgan their courage failed them; they sought to delay me, to turn back, to camp—anything but go forward. I would not listen to them—I had heard such stories so often. Presently, as we emerged from a long gorge, we were suddenly set upon and surrounded by truculent tribesmen. They knocked my servants off their mules and cut the loading ropes; they struck at me with their sticks, bruising both my forearms and hands—one so badly that I feared a broken bone. Not content with this one man put a loaded rifle to my ribs, his finger on the trigger threatening death if I did not hand over my rifle. Another struck me across the face with a stick and dragged me off my horse, declaring he would forthwith slit my infidel throat like a sacrificed bull and watch me drum my heels on the ground as the blood flowed—a vivid memory of what he had doubtless himself seen. One or two of the party seemed to dis-

## A CAPTURE

approve of his language and the needless vigour of his onslaught, urging him to await the arrival of Kikha (= Kadkhada Ibrahim Beg). A few minutes later he arrived, all smiles and apologies. His men had exceeded their instructions. "I told them to detain you with honour. I was not willing that you should pass this way without conferring distinction on my poor abode. I said 'bring me a hat'—they have brought me a head." "Dirt be on your head—*Rid ba sar-at*," he shouted angrily at my captor—"*tukhm-i-harámzada-i-jákash*—son of a prostitute and a pander—*chi gu khurdi*? What shameful act have you committed?" Then turning to me with a bow—"Be seated, I beg you—take your ease. My house is yours. My goods are yours. Recover here from the fatigue of your journey." I sat with my back to an oak and begged him to extend a like favour to my servants.

'He turned again to his men: "Bring tea, bring coffee, bring a water-pipe (*galyan*)—Kill a kid, make *Kabat*—let the ease of our guests be our delight—let us draw the pen of oblivion across the page of shame,"—with much more to the same effect. It was superb acting, for he had planned it all, though the "supers" had gone farther in their enthusiasm than he had intended and had treated us as they would have treated—and doubtless often had treated—their own countrymen.

'There was no kid and no tea, no coffee, except in my servant's saddle-bag. He, also battered with cudgels, rose to the occasion nobly and suggested that he should act as the Khan's servant and serve us all with tea. The old bandit graciously accepted the offer. Then conversation began on more general lines, from the strictly conventional to the conversational, from international affairs to national politics—and thence to local matters. Then back again to me. What was my rank—and my pay—my father's position, and how many brothers had I? What would my father have said had I been killed?—"He would be sorry," said I, "but he has many sons."

"And the British Government, what would they say?" "They care little for subalterns," I replied, "they would say 'we

## RANSOM

have others as numerous as sheep in Luristan.' But the Persian Government would be angry and would tell the Governor to exact the price of blood, and to hang the guilty on trees."

'His intention was to hold me to ransom; the object of his conversation was to get some idea of what ransom he should claim. After more tea and more coffee he got nearer to the point. I must stay some days with him—a week—a month—he would give me fine shooting and a *sigha*, temporary wife, with eyes like a gazelle, breasts like the udders of a yearling ewe—here he laughed at his own eloquence. But, if all these inducements could not persuade me to stay, I must console him by leaving some memento of my visit to his territory, his lands, his tribe, lest men should say that I had eyes only for the man, Nazar Ali Khan, who was unworthy to receive such an ambassador as I was.

'Four rifles, he suggested later, a mule or two, and a hundred *tomans* (say £25)—in cash—, a watch or two and a pair of binoculars alone would compensate him for the loss of my society and the prestige which a visit from me would confer upon him.

'The bargaining went on for an hour; I had my back to the tree; his supporters grew impatient. "Cut the dog's throat", said one, "and to hell with governments. Let us search his kit and see what talismans and what gold he has brought." They did so, but found little to interest them. After another hour of parleying I agreed to let him have my watch and chain (he had it already), my ring (already snatched), my revolver (already round his shoulder), and 50 *tomans*. The cord of friendship would not be broken *rishṭa-i-dusti gusikhṭa na shawad*, and the pen of oblivion should be drawn across the record of his followers' zeal. I should regard him as a friend and when I came again should not hesitate to call upon him. I had no money, however; and he dare not enter Khurramabad with a draft—he owed money there and had enemies. Dizful, Hamadan, Kermanshah were too far away. We seemed to have reached a deadlock. Then I remembered that Mirza Ali Akbar, my Burujird agent, had a cousin in Nihavand; I at once wrote a line to him and an

#### A PERSIAN LOVE-SONG

order for 50 tomans. This was acceptable. We loaded our mules and went on our way, my servants repeating the verse beginning *Lahaul wa laguwa*, "there is no Strength or Power but of God", and I thinking upon the Psalm *Nisi Dominus*, "If the Lord had not been on our side . . . they would have swallowed us up quick . . . they were so wrathfully displeased at us".

'Yet, such is the effect of sun and light and air that, an hour later, though humiliated, hungry and bruised we were cheerful once more and singing Persian love-songs in jest, as if in sorrow at leaving those whose clutches we had escaped.

Your fingers clutched my wrist, darling,

How can I leave you?

My fingers touch your breasts, beloved,

How can I leave you?

Your fingers run through my hair (but we sang *pockets*)

How can I leave you?

You have stolen my heart (*watch*), my precious one,

How can I leave you?

Your lips utter words of love,

How can I leave you?

You have turned my heart to despair,

How can I leave you?'

After riding 8 miles we reached the borders of Nazar Ali Khan's territory, where an escort awaited us. The rest of the story is told in a further letter.

'(L., June 1911) At this altitude it is possible to ride all day with little discomfort. The grassy valley lies at 5,000 feet, barren hills rise 1,500 feet or so on either side. I am the guest at the moment of Nazar Ali Khan, Fath-i-Sultan, a great opium eater but a man of character and energy who knows how to rule and how not to pay taxes. "Anarchy," said a landowner to me, "is bad, but it is little worse than bad government, and far cheaper." His village had not been destroyed by the tribes. I was met on his borders by an *istiqbal* or mounted guard of honour of sixty men, one of

whom led a fine Arab mare with customary silver trappings, known as *yadak*—the spare horse—for me to ride, but there was no saddle under the embossed caparisons. His eldest son was in charge, preceded by two gaunt men with silver staves. For 4 miles we cantered or galloped along while the escort caracoled and played *Kai-Kash*. Luckily my mount, a very fine stallion, did not make trouble for me and did me credit. We reached the great man's camp just before sundown and I was at once ushered into his presence. He met me at the tent door and led me with much ceremony to a cushioned seat upon his right. After formal inquiries, in the best Persian manner, as to my health, and that of His Majesty and his Government whose agent I was, tea was brought, the usual little glasses in silver holders; then coffee; then the Persian *qalyan* or water-pipe was passed round the assembled company. My chief difficulty was to explain and justify my surveys, my chief asset the fact that I had got to Khurramabad from Dizful, surveying all the way, and the fact that I was reputed to be able to say whether oil springs which exist round here were likely to be valuable, for the fame of Masjid-i-Sulaiman has spread over all Persia. And I was known to be prepared to pay my way, though not at exorbitant rates. He was indignant at the treatment I had received from the Chigini, but chuckled loudly at our burlesque love-song, which was repeated to him by one of the escort.

'After an hour of small talk I retired to my tent, where a sumptuous dinner was brought—so late that I felt sick with hunger, for nothing solid had passed my lips since dawn. It was a sheep's head, embedded in rice, garnished with stewed plums, pistachio nuts and almonds; a chicken grilled in walnut sauce, a skinful of buttermilk, and fine barley bread in loaves no thicker than brown paper. I ate my fill, my servants ate after me, and there was still plenty for the guards posted to protect my camp, while the dogs and cats scrambled for the bones.

'Next day I was aroused before dawn to visit some oil springs. The escort, he said, awaited me. I rose at once and was in the saddle a few minutes later, but there was no escort. He apologized lamely; he did not expect to see me

### A MID-DAY MEAL

in the saddle for an hour. Ten minutes later the horsemen came up through the gloom and we started up a stony, winding valley down which ran a clear, swift stream from the melting snows above. Dawn revealed on either side of us great limestone crags rising sheer for two thousand feet or more, the west lit up red by the rising sun; to the east dark blue shapes, sharply outlined against a sky which changed from deep blue to grey, grey to green, and then to pink, red, and finally to clear blue. An hour later the sun was high enough to penetrate the valley; birds began to move, red-legged partridges and *sisi* ran up the slopes. My host's son, armed with a shotgun, killed several from the saddle. Then a visit to the springs, two hours climbing to extend my triangulation, two hours walking along the summit crowned by snow through which peeped a mass of scarlet flowers, and down again to the valley. We halted for our midday meal under a great plane-tree; a lamb was killed, skinned and skewered and thrown on the fire. Liver, kidneys and heart were ready to eat ten minutes later; then the brains; lastly the meat, as tender as any diner in a London club could wish, served in a wrapping of thin barley bread. We drank butter-milk from a nickel bowl, and ended with tea and sugar. Then to the oil springs in a deep gorge, which I examined with proper care, taking samples in bottles, and specimens of the rocks whence it emerged.'

I returned to my camp to find that a *qasid* or runner from Burujird had brought my long-delayed mail. He was a professional runner—a type that progress has probably abolished by now. On his head was a white felt skull-cap; he wore rough white stockings without feet and cloth shoes, a short felt coat over a blue shirt, and very loose trousers reaching only to his knees. The mail-bag was slung upon a white staff which he carried on his shoulder. He had done the journey at the rate of nearly 40 miles a day and did not seem tired. He was warmly welcomed, for he enjoyed by tradition immunity from seizure, search, or attack, and could be employed to convey

‘MATÉRIAUX POUR SERVIR’

messages in any direction even between or through the territory of the bitterest foes. Before delivering his post to me he had made his bow to my host and given him the latest news. The Khan would entertain him and probably use him, as I should, to send letters back to Burujird or Khurramabad, Kermanshah, or Hamadan. How I welcomed his arrival may be gathered from my letter of June 12th to my mother:

‘I returned weary from a long day in the hills to find a glorious budget from Worcester—a feast for which I have waited for nearly three months—and it feels much longer. And *The Times* for a like period though only in its weekly form. You ask me the nature of my mission. The enclosed cutting from *The Times* tells more than I have heard from official sources. You ask what the state of Persia is. Here are cuttings from *The Times*—though you have of course seen them already—which tell the story more fairly than I can, for they have a perspective which is denied to me in this corner, forgotten of God and forsaken by all but Lurs.

‘I have established the fact that a cart road is possible and in fact easy to construct; that a railway line to Kharramabad from Dizful via the Kiyalan is possible but unlikely to be remunerative. I have not yet examined the two alternative routes which offer better prospects—the Diz valley or the Kashgan gorge.

‘That is all I have done; it does not sound much, but I have collected, as the French say, *matériaux pour servir*—data which will enable my successors to concentrate on worthwhile investigations. And they will, I hope, learn something from my trials.

‘Do not let Papa mourn over Steuart’s failure to take a First at Cambridge. He has probably been educated better at King’s College, thanks to his many interests, than if he had concentrated upon examinations. I am very conscious of the narrowness of my own interests. Here I live in blinkers, as everyone must. I have never played games, indoor or outdoor, I cannot sing or paint or play the piano



## EAST AND WEST

or even dance. My only sketches are of the plane table variety. I hope my work is the better for my concentration on the job in hand, but I sometimes doubt it.

‘It is good of you to have sent me the agenda of the Universal Races Congress. The taste for such meetings seems to grow. The Committee men seem to live for the most part in London suburbs. The more I see of Eastern races, and of Western races in the East—and I have suffered some notable additions to my fund of experience in this respect in the last few years—the more I feel that racial differences are deep and ineradicable. The obvious differences are superficial; the real ones are beneath the surface and create abysmal antipathies. Indians are less at home in Persia than Europeans. Caste as I see it is not a cause of racial separation but a fence erected to prevent either side falling into the abyss which separates the Hindu from the rest of the world. Education makes nations more conscious and indeed proud of their peculiar traditions and characteristics, which it tends to accentuate; it makes the points of difference sharper and harder to conceal. Attempts to inculcate Western ideas in an Eastern environment must fail unless the ideas suffer a metamorphosis so complete that the new synthesis is unrecognizable. Never was the East so far from the West as to-day—and the rift is widening. They may come to us, but we cannot go to them; they will take our inventions but not our systems of thought or government or religion. They have their own and they are not demonstrably inferior to ours or untenable except in minor respects.

‘Perhaps the fact that I have written this, and believe it firmly, proves the narrowness of my own outlook. But I am “the toad beneath the harrow” who “knows exactly where each pin-prick goes”. The conflict between the man on the spot and the man in authority at the centre cannot be resolved, so long as one nation is under the influence, direct or indirect, of another.’

I returned to Khurramabad a few days later and made some further excursions thence. Then to Burujird, Hamadan, Kermanshah (where I met my old colleague

## IN BAGHDAD

McDouall, well content with life and his garden), and finally Baghdad. Everywhere I heard the same complaint—anarchy—robberies—murders. My journeys were all on horse and mule back: partly by day, partly by night. Bank managers, missionaries, and Consuls were my hosts and I recorded, in some detail, views expressed by all those with whom I spoke. I always called, too, upon the Belgian Director of Customs, Russian Consuls, and upon any other Europeans in the local community. They were all watching me closely, and it amused me to note their surprise when I paid my call and told them what they doubtless knew already of my movements.

From Baghdad I wrote to my father:

‘Your sermon at Clifton College, and particularly the last part, meant much to me. The Psalms sung at Commem: *Nisi Dominus, Laetatus sum* and the 104th—mean more to me than all the rest of the Psalter, and the Chapel than all the rest of the School. To “sky” the memorial brasses would be a crime. They were a source of inspiration not less strong than the long lists of names, dating from the sixties, some of which have since become famous, on the Honours Boards in Big School. They were a link between the Chapel and India and the Army and the Civil Service abroad. It was of Indian Army officers that *Qui procul hinc . . . ante diem . . . periit* was written on one of the brasses which inspired Henry Newbolt in your day.

‘I am feeling the reaction after a long journey. I shall not be myself again till I get to Bushire where Cox’s stimulating personality and the steady pressure of telegrams and dispatches descending upon me from above will brace me. I am a little dejected at my poor prospects of leave, which by rule is denied me till I have done eighteen months training as well as three years probation. I have not begun the former. Will Government waive the rule? They hate making special cases and I do not like to ask to be so treated. Much depends on what they think of the work I am now doing. The report on which I am working cuts across all generally accepted

‘LAETUS SORTE MEA’

lines of thought hitherto on record as to railway alignments in this part of the world. I am sure it will be fairly considered; not so sure that it will be accepted as sound. I have tried to consider the whole question *ab initio*, uninfluenced so far as may be by preconceived ideas. Anyway I am *laetus sorte mea* (happy in my lot)—no one in the Department can ever have crowded as much into his first years as I have been enabled to do and nothing that I have learned from you, or at School, at Sandhurst or in India, has been useless to me. A little geology and a little botany, a little astronomy and a little more surveying; some Hindustani, Persian and Arabic, some Pushtu and Punjabi (to talk to my surveyors and Indian cavalymen), some French for the Belgians and Russians I meet, some German for the Germans. I can still bandy the classics with an occasional Consul, such as Capt. Lorimer or his brother J. G. Lorimer, I.C.S., or Crow at Basrah; and I have learned enough Christian and Islamic theology to enjoy a good sermon and to exchange ideas with Islamic priests, missionaries and chaplains. It is a good life, but my body is tired at the moment with three months in the sun, climbing hills or on horseback. My muscles are hard, but I am burdened with some very oriental sores which do not seem to heal.’

A fortnight later I wrote from Bushire:

‘I am installed in the Residency under the genial inspiration of Col. Cox and the motherly care of his wife. I have put on eight pounds since I left Baghdad. The sores are leaving me. I am to go off shortly on another railway survey from Bushire to Shiraz by Aliabad and Jahrum, which will dovetail in with my training in law and revenue work as an Assistant Commissioner in the U.P. I am to go to the Delhi Durbar on special duty, perhaps as one of several officers in charge of Persian and Afghan and Arab guests; then home on leave. I think you may assume that these arrangements are definite and unlikely to be altered. Anyway they are in print and under an august signature. I spent a few rather sad days at Mohammerah; one should never revisit one’s old haunts in the East. I am already a ghost. My successor’s friends are not mine; my old cronies came to lament the change.

'Cholera is abroad and my young Arab servant Khadhayar is terrified, for he lost both his parents thus when he was eight. He came back from town feeling ill and thought it had got him. I told him to bring his bedding and lay it near mine on the roof; I drank from his water-pot to show him that I had no fear of infection from him and I talked to him and told him stories till he fell asleep. He was still asleep when I woke.'

'(L., Aug. 23) I wish I could agree with you that we are learning to adjust ourselves to or understand Eastern (or for that matter other) races as well as our fathers did. It seems to me, however, that the tendency is in the contrary direction. Indian Civilians now start work at 27 as grown men with settled habits and prejudices, instead of, as formerly, youths of 18 with open minds. We reprobate mixed marriages—quite properly—as the children of such unions do not often get a fair chance, but we also frown upon unofficial and temporary unions, which have much in their favour. Most English women discourage any sort of social contact with Orientals, and *vice versa*. The fact that, rightly or wrongly, any woman's instinct is against *rapprochement* of any sort testifies to the deep-seated, biological origin of the prejudice. *Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point*. Unmarried men are far more accessible, in consequence, than married men and more useful to Government. This is not an argument against marriage "for without woman cannot man be", as the soldier in 1 Esdras 5 said to Darius; and I feel as much as anyone that it is not good for a man to live alone, but it should make a man careful in choosing a wife.

'Persia is getting steadily weaker. We are firmly set against intervention; we would gladly lend money if they were not certain to squander it. The Russian Government is also against intervention but under far greater temptation to intervene, and her local representatives, semi-oriental in outlook, frankly look forward to the prospect.

'Having embarked at Mohammerah on the Resident's dispatch boat R.I.M.S. *Lawrence* in order to avoid spending time on the Quarantine Island at Bushire, I find myself still here, for cholera broke out on board; we buried five men at

## TURKEY IN ASIA

sea and I was sent here along with the Turkish Consul to whom we gave a courtesy passage. I met him two years ago and enjoy his company. Constitutional disorders in Turkey and Persia have sobered him: he no longer expects miracles. On the other hand he is much more inclined to extreme nationalism than before: he includes Arabs and Armenians, Christian Syrians and Jews, Kurds and Assyrians within the ambit of his comprehensive curses. Turks, and Turks alone, can govern them, and only with rods of iron and whips of scorpions.

‘This is my last letter to you from Bushire: I leave in three days’ time on my next railway reconnaissance, gladdened by a private letter from Maj. Austin of the I.B. to say that my name has gone forward for the annual Macgregor Memorial Medal for the best bit of surveying and exploration done during the year by any officer serving under the Government of India.’

## CHAPTER VI

AUGUST—DECEMBER 1911

### *Railway Reconnaissance in Fars, and with Indian Troops from Bushire to Isfahan*

ON August 23rd, in sultry heat, I left the Residency at Sabzabad with my tiny caravan. Of the four men with me all but one were new hands; those who had been with me in Luristan remained at Mohammerah or Ahwaz to enjoy a spell of well-earned repose with their families. My route lay across the Mashileh, an expanse of salt mud, occasionally covered by sea water, which separates Bushire Island from the mainland. Thence to Darnishi and Dilwar along the Tangistan coast whose inhabitants, strong, lean, swarthy warlike folk, were expert smugglers of tea and sugar, now engaged with great success in the illicit importation of fire-arms into Persia and thence into Afghanistan. The arms traffic was just beginning to assume really serious proportions. The French Government was unable or unwilling to control the activities of French merchants in Oman who, defying the authority of the Sultan, were importing thousands of modern rifles and millions of rounds of ammunition every month. These were bought by Arab merchants and sent across the Gulf of Oman, or up the Persian Gulf, and secretly landed upon the Persian coast where caravans of mules, escorted by well-armed Afghan merchants, took them over. The traffic was very profitable: it was adventurous and was universally regarded as wholly legitimate, for smugglers all over the world are regarded with tolerance by society.

In a country where all men travelled armed, and where a man's status was judged by the quality of the arms he

## THE ARMS TRAFFIC

carried, arms dealers in Persia were popular and respected figures. A very different view was taken by the Government of Afghanistan: arms thus imported were purchased by tribesmen who actively or passively disputed the authority of the Amir, who was compelled, in his turn, to purchase from the Government of India yet larger quantities of munitions in order to maintain himself against potential rebels, who were thus being illicitly armed by French merchants through Muskat and Persia. The Persian Government were equally censorious of the traffic, but not less helpless: the tribes in S. Persia were being rapidly rearmed with weapons far more lethal than any in possession of the Central Government and were, for this reason, in a position to impose their will upon local Governors and, indirectly, upon the Shah's Ministers. The Sultan of Muskat had long suffered in the same manner: his hold upon the Oman coast, always precarious, was now so loose that his agents could not show themselves more than a few miles outside a few principal sea-ports.

The first step taken by the British Government, with the consent of all the Governments concerned, was to employ the Royal Navy to stop upon the high seas and search all dhows suspected of being engaged in the arms traffic. If caught with illicit arms and ammunition on board they were taken in prize, and burned.

This fate had befallen two *jashu'*—small dhows belonging to Dilwaris, many of whom had aided the *Constitutional* party to seize power in Bushire and had only been ejected when a force of Bluejackets was landed to support the authority of the Shah's Government. I expected therefore to be received with black looks, if not worse, and got them in full measure. Women cursed me in the streets, men made abusive gestures: shopkeepers refused to sell me food or drink, or even to bait my beasts. So, though tired, I crossed the Kuh Husain Kharagi and

## THE KHORMUJ VALLEY

camped in the Khormuj valley at Chamashki near a well of good water.

'The scenery of the coastal strip is the same for 50 miles east or west of Bushire: light sandy soil, low hills of soft sandstone capped here and there with conglomerate; brackish streams and in general brackish wells. No irrigation save from wells, by water-wheel or bucket lift. Here and there are groves of tall date-trees, and groups of mat huts made entirely from the leaves, stalks and trunks of date palms. A little wheat and, in a good season, much barley is grown, all of the hard variety which, when clean, fetches a good price in the London market. From the fibre of the date palm, coir-rope is made, and coir matting: the stumps of the leaves make good fuel—for nothing else is available to burn except dung, for there are almost no trees. Bread ovens are heated with dried thorny grass "which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven". It is a land of iron with a sky of brass: peopled by hardy, narrow-minded, quarrelsome folk whose sole loyalty is to their district or their tribe, to the family and their relations.'

My only consolation was that no local people knew of my intended journey, and as it was the month of Ramadhan and the months of August and September were so abominably hot, robbers were unlikely to be seeking their prey.

On August 25th I called on Jamal Khan of Khormuj, a local chief whose appearance and manners were as good as his reputation was bad. He was dignified, courteous, and hospitable, and provided me with an escort of armed men as far as his authority extended.

'To men of his age and, indeed, to almost everyone, the rigid fast of *Ramadhan*, from dawn to dusk, is a great physical and mental strain when it falls during the hottest months of the year. The well-to-do take three meals between dusk and dawn, and sleep all day; those who must work—and most Tangistanis observe the fast strictly—are left exhausted and with frayed tempers.



## SAIYID ALI AKBAR

'I was not therefore surprised to encounter repeated difficulties with my guides and escorts and I might have failed to keep any of them had I not, following the custom of the country, left Bushire with a good supply of the types of cartridge (.303 Mauser .450) most in demand. They would have refused money, but were tempted by the promise of payment in cartridges at the rate of £1 per 100.

'Jamal Khan's men left me at Shanbeh, and after a day's negotiations I obtained a fresh escort from Pas Rudak, a district hitherto unvisited by any European and almost unmapped. At this point I began my plane table survey afresh. The hills were waterless; a shimmering haze covered the earth, making observations almost impossible except for an hour before and three hours after sunrise. Pas Rudak, a broad plain of riverain terraces, well irrigated with great possibilities of further development, is traversed by a stream of brackish water which even in August was up to my horse's girth: it is probably unfordable for six months of the year.

'I was doubtful of the reception I should get from the local headman, Saiyid Ali Akbar, if I appeared unannounced, so I sent my trusty servant Mirza Daud ahead with commendatory letters from Jamal Khan and went to sleep, exhausted by climbing and by the sun, in the shadow of a great rock in this thirsty land.

'Some four hours later he returned, almost as tired as I had been, with good news. The Saiyid would receive us with honour and would provide us with a new escort thence to Tahiri. An hour later I was ushered into his presence: he was genial but uncouth—not a common failing among leading men even in these remote parts. He was, he explained gruffly, half Persian and half Turk (*Qashqai*) and found it hard to save himself and his dependants from being crushed between the exactions of the Central Government and the depredations of *Qashqai* tribes whose chief, Saulat-ud-Dauleh, had purchased the manorial rights (*tiyul*) from the Central Government some years ago. He pointed out a series of great mounds, some almost as big as those near Shush, and explained that the local name Duzdgah (thieves' place), though not inappropriate, is really a corruption of Dizgah (the place

## A CRITERION OF CIVILIZATION

*of hill-forts*). The people who made those mounds, he opined, lived long before Alexander the Great: they were true *Farsi*—inhabitants of ancient Fars—i.e. original Persians. It must, he argued, have been at least 2,500 years since the mounds were occupied, for there were signs that they were of the same date as a system of irrigation which suggested that the river levels were then at least 25 feet higher than at present, and they had only fallen by 3 feet since the time of Shah Abbas. Such reasoning and such an interest in antiquity is uncommon in Persia, and contrasted sharply with his rough manner and extreme austerity of dress.

'My escort had shot a mountain sheep while it slept in a ravine under cover of a rock: they brought it to me and I presented it to my host, who accepted it with alacrity. It was served up a few hours later, admirably cooked. The longer I travel in Persia the more I am impressed with the propriety of reckoning the standard of living and of civilization of nations not by what the common people eat but by the way they cook it. By this standard Persia, the oldest of Eastern civilizations, compares favourably with any nation in Europe and is far in advance of India. I watched this particular piece of meat being made ready: it was cut into strips, pounded with heavy stones, cut into fragments and, fat and lean alternating, roasted over a hot charcoal fire upon skewers, as a *kabab*.

'My host pressed me urgently to do the rest of my journey in the cool of the evening or before dawn: this I could not do, for I had to make a rough survey of my route. He warned me that my next stages—to Rîz and Tahiri—would be hotter than any I had yet traversed. He was right. On the following day one mule collapsed. I sold it to a villager for £1 and purchased another for £12—the process of bargaining taking a whole day. I struggled on to Padri and Bard Pahan, where I found what we needed more than food—water and shade.'

I could not delay, for I had undertaken to meet the R.I.M.S. *Lawrence*, which was due at Tahiri next day with Cox on board.

'(L., Sept. 2) I have never had such a hot or tiring journey,

## TAHIRI

nor can I remember any worse track than that which leads to the little port of Tahiri, where the limestone mountains almost reach the water's edge. The track leading down the slopes, which faces south all the way, was atrocious: only once did we pass a tiny spring: the rock was so hot that one could not put one's bare hand upon it. I had to walk all the way up, some 2,000 feet and down some 5,000 feet. Yet this was once a famous port—SIRAF, mentioned by a score of early geographers: it antedates Hormuz, which is just as hot and desolate, by many centuries. It was a port of call for Sindbad the Sailor and it has a history far older than Islam, for we passed, as we entered the town, a great number of pre-Islamic graves cut deep into the rock.'

There was no breeze. I was soaked with perspiration and, to add to my troubles, was badly stung above the ankle by a wasp. After eating and drinking a little—I dared not take much lest I should get cramp in the stomach—I went down to the pebbly beach and entered the water. It was as hot as I could bear!

I lay awake all night, too tired to sleep, devoured by mosquitoes, regretting that the *Lawrence* had not arrived. 'Heaviness may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning'; at the first flush of dawn I spied the *Lawrence* on the horizon, steaming slowly towards us; by 6 o'clock she had cast anchor, close to the shore, in deep water. I went out to meet her in a small local row-boat and a few minutes later was enjoying every luxury except the presence of Col. Cox, who had been detained by the growing seriousness of the situation in S. Persia and sent his Deputy, R. L. Birdwood, with whom I exchanged views and laments.

'(From my diary) This journey has played the devil with my equipment and clothes, the horse's sweat plus the sun rotting the saddlery: mine is rotting my clothes which are streaked with brown stains wherever the instrument case or straps have lain for any length of time. The hot damp is

## GUN-RUNNING

rusting my revolver, and my men's rifles, and is corroding even my instruments.

'Birdwood was very pessimistic as to the trend of events in S. Persia in the next few months and suggested I should abandon my trip to Shiraz, owing to anarchy in those parts. Cox was willing but, bless him, left it to my discretion. Birdwood gave me all the current telegrams on the subject to read,<sup>1</sup> and they certainly made things look black. But I could not bear to abandon my plans. The chance might not present itself again. I should be pushed off on some other job: Cox has nothing particular for me to do at the moment and I have already done most of the worst part. It is something to have walked quickly through Tangistan in this time of trouble: if I can get to Shiraz without a broken head I shall acquire a reputation for being lucky which I already deserve, and perhaps for being prudent, which I do not deserve nor even desire as yet.'

The *Lawrence* left on the following afternoon and I went on shore, to hear from the headman of Tahiri, a youth named Hatim Khan, the usual lamentable tale of the savagery of the Royal Navy, who had captured and burned two dhows belonging to the port because, unknown to the owner, they happened to have on board 'just a few' rifles and a few boxes of ammunition which foolish passengers, unknown to the captain, had concealed in bales of sugar and baskets of dates respectively.

I said I was sorry but could do nothing: the Persian Government forbade the import of arms and ammunition: the Navy were within the law in acting as they did. '*Zur ast*'—it was force, brute force, he repeated: yes, I said, that is true. Force is sometimes the only argument—the only remedy—and we are using it. Let the guilty repent, for their misdeeds bring misery on the innocent. I learned afterwards that he had done quite a lot of arms smuggling himself and received a commission on all

<sup>1</sup> Most of them later published as a Blue Book.

## JAM

goods smuggled within ten miles or so of Tahiri on either side.

Before dawn next day I started the weary climb up the steep track down which, for twenty centuries or more, donkeys have brought, in summer, pomegranates and grapes from the highlands of Jam to the parched inhabitants of Tahiri. Half-way up the hill we met such a caravan: in the attempt to avoid a collision one of my mules slipped and rolled downhill, turning two complete somersaults. I thought his back must be broken, but he got up gamely, shook himself, and rejoined the caravan—but my two *yakhhdans* (light wooden boxes covered with leather) were crushed and everything that was capable of breaking under a sledge-hammer in them was in comminuted fragments.

‘(*Diary*) Jam is an attractive little place with a pleasant mannered *kalantar* who seemed glad to see me. With him came one of the Saulat ud Dauleh’s agents, ready to tell me everything I wanted to know about *Qashqai* tribal organization, land revenues, &c., in return for what I could tell him of events in other parts of Persia, as to which, thanks to Birdwood, I was well posted.

‘He talked rapidly and well, while the *kalantar* added a running commentary. So soon as the sun was down we took tea—then coffee—then a little bread and fruit—then water—then some more bread. Two hours or so later dinner was served. There is nothing greedy about a Persian breaking his fast. They merely murmured “Praise God” with the first gulp, and thereafter sipped their tea and ate slowly, not abating in the smallest degree their polite manners. I know what it is to be terribly thirsty and what the pains of hunger mean, and have no doubt that they must have been in great discomfort.

‘I got so much information from this genial pair that I stopped an extra day here in order to record it in proper form while it was fresh in my mind.

‘Then I remembered Birdwood’s forebodings of trouble

## THE QASHQAI

round Shiraz and decided to send the report to him by runner via Tahiri lest I be robbed on the way or knocked on the head.'

The report, in the light of what happened later, proved to be of some importance. It suggested that the *Qashqai* were so well armed that they could defy with success not only the Persian Government troops but the gendarmerie under Swedish officers, and that they might even oppose British troops sent to protect British interests in the interior of Persia, a step already under consideration.

This done I resumed my journey northwards via Makku, Chah Pahan, and Kurdeh and Garmusht. The road in places was most difficult. The track ran across a succession of steep limestone ranges, separated from each other by narrow, fertile, well-irrigated valleys. We had to unload the mules again and again and manhandle them over slippery ledges of sloping rock, one barefoot man holding the headstall and another the poor brute's tail to keep them from slipping to destruction.

'I was everywhere received with courtesy and usually treated as a guest. Each valley was a social unit with its own leaders and headmen, its own reserves of grain and its own ancient traditions. Civilization here is of extreme antiquity. Almost every valley had its mounds, probably older than Babylon, its own pre-Islamic rock tombs and inscriptions and its own bit of paved road, inherited probably from Sassanian times.

'On 9th Sept. at Pidū I was able to connect my traverse with one made ten years earlier by Khan Bahadur Sher Jang, an Afghan surveyor of the Survey of India working under Capt. Crookshank, R.E. The local khans remembered them and also Butcher of the Indo-European Telegraph Department, who had passed up the road from Tahiri to Jahrum 20 years ago.

'The *Qashqai* enjoy a better reputation here than elsewhere, for many of the village lands were owned by Saulat ud Dauleh, who had just acquired the title of Sardar Ashair, and he "does not permit his dogs to worry his own sheep".

## A CHANGE IN PROSPECT

'Then to Gird Bisheh—a new bit of country to survey, and across the Mund River at Gudar-i-Tiari and Makku (via the long winding gorge of the Mund River). Here at last I met cool weather, orange gardens and abundance of fruit, as also of mosquitoes. The country was wholly at the mercy of the *Qashqai*, but safe from their depredations, thanks to the policy of Saulat ud Dauleh. Men were not travelling armed: the guards over my tent carried only sticks. Food for man and beast was good and cheap and plentiful. Then through Kirdi and Hasanabad to the Qir o Qarzi plain to Madkhan, where this, my second traverse, joined up satisfactorily with one made in 1878 by Abbott.'

'(L., Sept. 20) Col. Cox predicted that a practicable railway alignment from Bushire to Shiraz would be found, broadly speaking, along the route I have followed, and that it would pass through Aliabad, though the authorities were sceptical. I have fulfilled his predictions and have done so in the manner and by the means I chose (though he left these, somewhat doubtfully, to my discretion). So we shall both have reason to be satisfied. I do not myself think that a railway from Bushire to Shiraz is worth building, as Bushire is a bad harbour, but it is a very old established port of entry and, if railways are to be built at all, we must examine all or as many feasible alignments as possible before selecting a few for detailed examination. I have been myself over the Bandar Abbas-Shiraz line, and over the Dizful-Burujird line: now I have done a third and I can compare them all at first hand.

'What a change it will be, instead of dabbling in *haute politique* with a rifle and a plane table, to become on January 1st next an Assistant District Commissioner, at the bottom of the civil hierarchy, followed perhaps by a spell as Third Assistant to a First Class Resident, wearing fine raiment, arranging dinner parties and writing out menus for her ladyship. I think I can accommodate myself to the change, but it will not be easy at first. For the past month I have been up most mornings at 4.0, on my legs with four hours interval at midday till 6 or 7 p.m. Then food, and report writing by candlelight till I lie down on my quilt, upon a prayer carpet, pull a sheet over my face to keep out mosquitoes and a

### THE POLITICAL WIND CHANGES

blanket over the rest of me and sleep, dressed but for my boots, so that an alarm will not find me helpless.'

On arrival at Jahrum I asked by telegraph for leave to return via Behbahan so as to examine this alignment also, thus completing the series. This scheme, however, came to nothing, for reasons which will appear later.

Hitherto all had gone smoothly. I was within 50 miles of Shiraz and heard of nothing which was likely to interfere with my movements. I was congratulating myself upon my good luck *and* prudence, when at Jahrum the political wind began to change.

'The guards sent to look after me by night conspired to rifle my kit and were only frustrated by an honest muleteer who overheard and told me of their talk. I retorted by collecting everything and going to sleep on top of it. Then my head muleteer took fright, and had to be forcibly restrained from running off, with his mules. The guide supplied me by the Mayor of Jahrum likewise took fright and ran away before I had gone more than a few miles from town. The headman at Deh Zir, my first halt, would not let me spend the night in a garden but made me go inside the walled village. They were not afraid of the *Qashgai* but of the Baharlu Arabs: they were tenants not of Saulat ud Dauleh but of his enemy Qawam ul Mulk, who had no control over the Arab tribes. The headman and his friends, uncouth peasants, were pathetically insistent on the folly of hoping for the restoration of order except by foreign agency. He promised to provide guards to take me over the hills to Fasa by a short cut.

'Next day, however, I was assured that the short cut was unsafe—the pass being already held by Arab robbers who had doubtless been warned of my intention by some kindly villager. So I had to take the roundabout route via Bab Arab, a village whose inhabitants were so nervous that they greeted my little party with a burst of musketry fire. I here took on a new lot of guards, who began to blackmail me as soon as I was out of sight of the village. I was, however, armed and had been at pains from Jahrum onwards to arm



## AN ATTEMPT AT BLACKMAIL

every one of my party. We had four rifles to their one: I took a high hand and swore I would shoot and kill anyone who raised a hand against any one of us. They changed their tune and said they were only joking; and that when they asked me a tip of £1 each they meant only a shilling.

'On reaching Nasirabad, however, one of them made a grab, as he left, at one of my servant's rifles, cutting the strap as he did so. I saw him do it and struck him across the face with a riding whip. He dropped the rifle and fled amid the jeers of my new friends who, quite undeterred by my action, volunteered to provide a guard to Zahidan. The Khan himself went with me, partly I think in order to confide to me his own feelings as to current events. The Qawam family were no longer in control of the Arabs: the day would come when Saulat himself would no longer control the Qashqai. Both tribes were well armed and not easy to control except at the expense of a third party, viz. the villagers. Government by tribes and by great families was at an end: the system had broken down. What was now needed was government by a Government—the Persian Government, with or without foreign officials and troops. He commended me warmly to the headman of Zahidan, who was most hospitable, found me pleasant quarters in a walled garden and gave me a good dinner. Nightingales sang and night-jars belled steadily from dusk till nearly midnight when I went to sleep under brilliant stars in a clear sky and a light breeze that was just beginning to be cold.'

'(*To my mother*) I seem to remember writing a great deal about meals: the fact is that when one gets only one square meal a day the verb "to dine" both in the future and past tenses is of absorbing interest. The food I carry is just the bare necessities of life—lentils, rice, dates, dried bread and a few raisins and nuts, sugar, tea, coffee, salt, pepper. That is all. A good well cooked meal is not so common as not to be memorable.'

I reached Fasa without incident on September 21st and spent hours listening to merchants and landowners and tenants bewailing the prevailing anarchy. A large

## SHIRAZ

deputation came to ask that Fasa should be placed under British protection. A strongly nationalistic official called on me later to protest at the idea. I laughed at it, saying that the most we should even contemplate was protecting the main trade routes.

‘He was very despondent—neither monarchist nor “constitutionalist” but an honest man in real distress at the condition of his country. He warned me to be on my guard on the road to Shiraz and to be ready to shoot, and to kill if need be.

‘I gave out that I should leave at midday—but left at 3.30 a.m. I said I should go by one route, but took another, and did 85 miles to Sarvistan without halting anywhere except to pick up some Basiri Arab guards in addition to our party. Then to Maharlu with an all-Arab guard—reputed to be habitual robbers. They seemed as depressed as the merchants of Fasa. Life for the tribesmen was hard and was getting harder: their leaders robbed them, and were in their turn fleeced by rapacious Governors; the tribesmen robbed each other, or villagers, travellers or merchants. No-one cared to build, or even to sow more than he need, lest he be deprived of the fruits of his labour.’

Shiraz, whither I was bound, was only 15 miles distant: the Persian Governor-General, Nizam es Saltaneh, was virtually a prisoner in the city, which was besieged by Qashqai and ‘Arab’ nomads. One of the Qawam family, Nusrat ud Dauleh, had been killed, one stage outside the town on the road to Bushire, in circumstances which suggested that he had been murdered with the connivance of the Governor-General by Qashqai tribesmen under the orders of Saulat ud Dauleh. The dead man’s brother, Qawam ul Mulk, had taken refuge with the British Consul, Mr. G. G. Knox, to whom I had sent word of my impending arrival, begging him to send an armed escort to meet me at the Pul-i-Fasa.

Knox could have asked Saulat to assure me safe conduct, but was unwilling thus to put himself under an

## CAPTURED ONCE MORE

obligation to a man who was in open rebellion against the Governor-General. He therefore asked the Governor-General to ensure my safe arrival, but he did, and could do, nothing.

‘When I neared Pul-i-Fasa, some nine miles from Shiraz, I saw ten armed men on horseback gathered on the bridge and assumed, not unnaturally, that they were the guard for whom I asked. My own escort from Maharlu also saw them and, hastily bidding me God-speed, galloped off. I rode on, congratulating myself on the success of my arrangements. I was soon disillusioned. The leader of the guard bowed politely as I rode up and saluted me with compliments. This done his party set upon me and my men, and beating me with a heavy stick, tore my watch and chain from my pocket, cut the bandolier of my rifle and snatched it away, as also my revolver. I was cudgelled heavily over the head and back and pulled off my horse. My servants fared as badly—stripped of their best clothes which they had donned in order to appear at their best when entering the city: they were dragged off their mounts and stripped even of their shoes.

‘My protests were met with the taunt “the British Consul is protecting the Qawam; he cannot protect you”. After a time they marched me and my servants, all bleeding, to the nearest village, then full of Qashqai tribesmen, and handed me over to a tribal chief, who forbade any further reprisals till orders came from Saulat ud Dauleh, to whom I publicly dictated a euphemistic letter requesting him to arrange for my safe passage to the Consulate.

‘All that night I sat, in open *majlis*, with my captors—all Darrehshuri tribesmen with a few Kashkulis, two tribes with whom Saulat has little influence. Villagers with broken heads came to plead for the return of stolen cattle. The tribal leaders, sitting ill at ease on chairs, cuffed some, beat others mercilessly, making the villagers realize, as a Qashqai said to me, that in modern Persia the rifle is a sceptre and that every rifleman is a Shah.

‘During the night some of them seized, and took their pleasure in turn of, several girls. I heard their cries and the

### SAULAT UD DAULEH INTERVENES

angry cries of their mothers. Others robbed a village close by, killing several men: I passed it next morning, heard the wailing women and saw the bodies being laid out for burial.

'My hosts and captors, elated with their success, grew more friendly—and contemptuous—as the hours passed. They ate largely, and invited me and my servants to eat with them: they drank innumerable cups of tea and speculated upon the amount of ransom I might properly be asked to pay, and what they would do if I hesitated, or the Consul or the Bank refused to comply with their demands.

'I declined to take them seriously and turned the conversation to lighter topics, mindful of Robert Walpole's saying that

"he always talked bawdy after dinner, so that everybody could join in".

'At last they rolled themselves in their cloaks and slept round me. I was too cold to sleep well, for they had taken all my bedding and even my saddle-cloth and I had no overcoat, for I had started in the heat of summer and was travelling light.'

Next morning a reply came from the Saulat, couched in conciliatory terms. I was to be escorted with honour to the Consulate; whatever had been taken from me and my servants was to be restored. Another letter, which was received with jeers, begged the leaders of the Darreh-shuri tribesmen to do no harm to the person or property of villagers or townsmen, in order that the noble Qashqai tribe might earn the gratitude of the Shirazis.

'After some discussion the headmen agreed that so far as I was concerned the Saulat's orders must be obeyed, but not too literally. Some of my property was returned: I was told that the rest had already been taken away by those who had seized it. I was assured that my arms and ammunition were needed in order to repel an impending attack by 500 Arabs, partisans of the Qawam, and I should not grudge this parting gift. Six men took me and my servants by a devious route to the Consulate. One of them, a man of some status, opened his heart to me: he was a tribesman, but was closely related

## THE ARMS TRAFFIC

to the villagers. Against the Qawam family he had little to say; but he hated and feared the Arab tribes behind the Qawam. The Saulat would make a good governor of Fars; for the Governor-General, a master of intrigue, who had set tribe against tribe and family against family, nothing was too bad. Until he left Shiraz there would be no peace.'

I was impressed by the large supplies of arms and ammunition in the hands of the tribes between the coast and Shiraz: they were far better armed than Lurs or Bakhtiaris and better mounted; better clothed and better fed. The arms traffic was doing as much harm to Persia as to Afghanistan and Baluchistan. I had ascertained, by examining rifles and boxes of ammunition, that practically the whole trade was conducted by French firms, though many of the rifles and some of the ammunition were made in Germany. There was little British-made ammunition and very few British rifles. The few I saw antedated the South African war by several years and had probably passed through several hands and many countries.

Knox was glad to see me, for he had been hard pressed by recent happenings. The Indian Consular Guard had been shut up for a month in the Consulate—a building lying in its own grounds half a mile outside the town. The Qawam ul Mulk occupied one of the three spare rooms. His fear of assassination by night was increased by what I had seen and heard and by the way I had been treated. I undertook to sleep, fully dressed and armed, across the door of his room and arranged strings and bells which could scarcely fail to sound the alarm in good time if some hired bravo should scale the Consulate walls. The Qawam, too, slept dressed and armed. Knox, with admirable composure, dressed for dinner, and treated both of his guests with a nonchalant and detached good humour which effectively hid a vigorous personality. His promotion, some years later, to the Diplomatic

## A CRISIS OVER

Service, in which he attained distinction, was well deserved.

Colonel Cox wired to me to await orders, adding that I was unlikely to be left idle for long. So I busied myself with completing, and typing in proper form, all my reports and in making two fair copies of my maps which I sent to India through Bushire via Tehran and Baghdad, the direct road to the coast being closed even to the Persian postal service.

‘(L., Oct. 10) The crisis ended yesterday and after Knox had been authorized by the Foreign Office to warn the tribes that, if they attacked the Consulate (in order to kill our refugee guest), the British Government itself would take military action against them. This step should have been taken long ago but the F.O., perhaps pardonably, hesitated long. The report that I gave of my own treatment outside Shiraz made light of the incident, because I did not wish to get the reputation of being, like one of Napoleon’s generals, “a man on whose head tiles are apt to fall”—in other words, of being someone who is always getting into trouble. This may have made Government under-estimate the seriousness of the situation. On the other hand the final decision to give the tribes this warning was announced two days after I had sent a “personal and private” telegram backing up Knox.

‘It is pleasant to sleep in a bed again and to take one’s meals without the accompaniment of rifle shots, which have been humming intermittently over the Consulate by day and night for the last month.’

My reports, now of only historical interest if any, showed that a railway alignment via Bushire–Shiraz was feasible; the gradients need not exceed 1 in 100, no tunnelling and little bridging would be necessary. On commercial grounds an alignment via Bandar Abbas would offer solid advantages and would not cost more per mile.

Apart from railway matters, I had gained valuable personal experience of the tribes of Fars and their ways

## COMMISSARIAT

and had amassed material which might one day be of use to the Intelligence Branch and to British Consular officers in Persia. I had got through without any such incident as might have necessitated diplomatic protests in Tehran which, in turn, might have prejudiced my further employment. My shoulders and arms still ached with bruises, the cuts on my head were still unhealed, but I was not disabled, and by the end of September I was ready for duty again.

On October 16th the following telegram reached Knox from Bushire:

‘Three Squadrons 39th Central India Horse from Bombay will leave Bushire November 1. Wilson should arrange for supplies at every stage on the route from Kazvin to Isfahan as follows:

Meat . . . . .	200 lb.
Flour . . . . .	1000
Grain . . . . .	5000
Fodder . . . . .	12,000
Fuel . . . . .	1000

He may purchase supplies in advance and should lay in stocks at Shiraz where consular guard will be strengthened by one squadron. Govt. of India rely upon him to make economical arrangements.’

I was delighted at the prospect of this. I at once started to make detailed plans beginning at Dashtarjin, two stages west of Shiraz on the Bushire road, when I sent supplies over the pass to Mian Kutal. I cleaned out rooms in the *caravansarai*, advanced money here, gave promissory notes there, and did what I could to ensure that supplies, once laid in, should not be pilfered. Accurate weighing was almost always out of the question. The conventional scales of weights and prices varied from place to place. The Indian troops, I knew, would want milk and tea and sugar, and the officers chickens and vegetables on payment. Dried fruit and vegetables

## THE INDIAN CAVALRY

would find a ready sale. It would be well to discourage the men from entering village bazaars: so I arranged for retail sales at the *sarai*.

On November 1st I received orders to meet Col. Douglas, who commanded the 39th C.I.H., at Kazrun, and to accompany him to Isfahan. From October 16th, when I first received my orders, to November 7th, when I met the column at Kazrun, I rode some 20 or 30 miles daily, making full use of the fresh horses of the Shiraz escort. The British and Persian staff of the Indo-European Telegraph Department from Dashtarjin to Isfahan helped me greatly. The weather was against me, and I spent many hours in bitter rain which I was ill clothed to withstand, for I had come up in thin summer khaki and what little surplus clothing I possessed had been stolen by the Qashqai outside Shiraz. But I kept my saddle and bridle, and a heavy sheepskin coat, bought in the market, served both to cover me by day and to keep me warm at night.

The march from Kazrun to Shiraz was uneventful. The Indian Cavalry, as was to be expected, created a most favourable impression. They were Moslems, and of a fine type; they were devout in their ceremonial observances, well clothed, well mounted, well armed. They paid, after much bargaining, for all they took and knew enough of the value of money not to be cheated. A few of the men talked a little Persian; they treated Hajis and Saiyids with reverence.

‘(L., Nov. 10) This new job will keep me in Persia till the end of the year, so I miss the Delhi Durbar, on which I had set my heart. I should have met scores of friends whom I have not seen for years, and also members of the Indian Political Department, to all of whom I am a stranger. The gods in Simla are mere names to me and I to them, though I must appear fairly frequently on their records in connection with something startling. It will also delay my return to



## AT DEHBID

India for training. If I stay here much longer I shall become a Persian expert, and having made my bed in Persia shall be expected to lie on it. But I want to keep in touch with India, which offers better prospects of promotion, though these are not bad in the Gulf, and of married life which are here very poor. I have however no right to complain: both my last two missions were of my own devising and as a former Quartermaster of an Indian Regiment I am obviously marked out for this job, which I owe to the Consul General in Isfahan, Grahame, whom I stayed with in Shiraz in 1907. He wired for "Wilson, whose efficiency I know", which was kind and generous.

'My Report on Fars, nearly ready, runs to 600 pages of typed foolscap: I work at it in the intervals between buying provisions and riding great distances from one caravansarai to another. I am as fit as I ever have been—not a spare pound of flesh anywhere. The colours of the sky at dawn and at dusk are a perpetual joy, and though there is rain and hail, now and then, the weather is good for travelling, a joyful contrast to the torrid months of August and September.'

While the 39th C.I.H. was on the road from Bushire to Shiraz a party of the Boir Ahmadis, who live in the hills west of the Shiraz–Isfahan road, had twice robbed, stripped, and maltreated Dr. (Miss) Ross. She had every right to be on the road: no one had warned her not to travel, for there had been no attacks on unarmed travellers for some time. She returned to Dehbid and awaited our arrival.

'The F.O. won't let me send fifty men to bring her to Shiraz, because this might be represented (by Russia) as intervention and provoke similar action, perhaps with less reason, in N. Persia. The Governors of Fars and Isfahan can do nothing but express regret.'

A week later I wrote:

'All goes well; we are at Dehbid; I am enjoying everything except the weather. I have never been so wet or so cold for

#### ATTACK BY TRIBESMEN

so long—48 hours on end in wet clothes in drenching rain. I could not help it, for I had to go ahead of the troops to fix things in advance and then return on my tracks. But for lots of fresh horses it would be impossible. The accounts—for some thousands of pounds—are troublesome, but the C.O. does not worry me, or himself, and up to date no-one has gone short. I brought with me some miscellaneous articles of clothing for Miss Ross, whose age, I should add, is about 50, collected and packed for me by a lady in Shiraz: she was glad of them but asked earnestly for a camp bed and blankets. I blamed myself for not having thought of them, so I hastily gave her all my bedding and a blanket or two borrowed from others. I shall have to sleep in my coat on the stone floor of the *sarai* for the rest of the journey. But it is worth it, for she beams gratitude through her spectacles, having had no bed for a fortnight.'

'(L., Dec. 12) *Isfahan*. This is the end of my journey: all has gone smoothly. Miss Ross has been restored to her missionary friends in Shiraz; the 39th C.I.H. are properly housed and Knox delighted to have them. Once only did we have any shooting on the road when some tribesmen attacked a large caravan which was accompanied by 200 or so Persian soldiers, who were straggling along on foot, their rifles stuck under the girths of the donkeys, mules or camels. The caravan promptly turned back; the soldiers fled, and the robbers thus secured a number of rifles. I was with the advanced guard and saw what had happened. I sent word to Capt. Eckford, who was with the main body half a mile behind. He at once brought up 200 men at a canter, and charged the tribesmen along a broad front in open country, putting them to flight, recovering all the stolen mules and managing to kill a few by dismounted fire from points of vantage. He and Lieut. E. T. R. Wickham [now, 1940, M.P. for Taunton] who were well in front, were unwounded, but three men were wounded, one seriously. The robbers took refuge in a tower. After some discussion Eckford quite rightly reached the conclusion that it was not our job to dislodge them as they would not attack us again, so we passed by. It was not our job to protect caravans, and it was only by

## PERSIAN NATIONALISM

chance that we came up just when the robbers were at their old game.

'The country is in a miserable state, and ready to accept any form of government which will give them security. There is an anti-Russian agitation in the North and an anti-British movement in the South, an anti-Persian Government (or any government) movement in North and South, and an anti-Shah and an anti-constitution agitation in every large town. The Russians are probably better fitted to perform the elementary task of restoring order than we are but, having restored "order", they would soon become unpopular. So should we, after a few years. I have given up hope of any improvement except by Anglo-Russian intervention to which on political grounds I am strongly opposed. From this dilemma there is no escape. I sympathize with Persians whose self-respect makes them resent foreign intervention, though they themselves seem incapable of putting things right. Yet the destruction of property is great and the misery of the poor pitiful to behold. It will be ten years or more before this country recovers from the anarchy of the last three. I like Persians, of all classes, even nomads and robbers: they are very human beings, much easier to work and live and play with than Indians and very much like us in some ways. It hurts me to see them suffer as they do.

'I have been to Church here—for the first time for four years—and with profound satisfaction.

'I am hard at work on Accounts which I want to get rid of before I go back, and on my monumental report on Fars. Official publications bearing my name already run to some 1000 pages of print, quite apart from my voluminous despatches. I am determined to leave a clean slate before I go back to India. Once there I shall be caught up in the machine and shall soon be out of tune and out of touch.

'I have also had some social pleasures—carol practice with the missionaries, one of whom is a Pears cousin (née Aldous) married recently to a young clergyman here, Linton, of whom all men including Persians speak well. It is pleasant to find that I have not forgotten the carols and can sing most of the Psalms without often referring to the book.

### ‘A SORT OF INTUITION’

‘The Resident under whom I have been working since I came to Persia is now Sir Percy Cox—to the delight of us all and particularly of those with whom he is in closest touch.’

A week later I wrote (Dec. 29th):

‘Things have “gone wrong” in the way I feared. Another detachment of troops has been attacked by Qashqai in one of the gorges on the Bushire–Shiraz road. Smart, who was on his way to take over the Consulate at Shiraz from Knox, has been badly wounded and several men were killed. My first instinct is to wish that I had been there—I might have prevented it happening. I have, or think I have, a sort of intuition when in tribal country which tells me when there is danger and how to avoid it. I watch men’s faces when they do not know I am watching them; I employ muleteers and others to listen. I am always feeling the patient’s pulse and taking his temperature—unknown to him. Smart is a good man with plenty of experience, but not of tribal country. I only hope that the incident, serious as it is, will not lead to intervention. If it should do so, however, I shall hope to be actively engaged and I wired to Cox, who is in Calcutta, asking that I might be employed in Fars if occasion arises. I was to have gone back to Bushire via Shiraz. I must now go, and go quickly, via the Bakhtiari road and Ahwaz so as to be on the spot if more troops are sent.’

‘(L., Dec. 29) I leave on New Year’s Day for Ahwaz after a very pleasant fortnight here—though in bitter weather, and in a house consisting mainly of large rooms, perfect in summer but as cold as the fireless library at Rochdale in winter. The Consul General, George Grahame, is an ideal host and I have learned much from him. He has a good library—a rarity in Persia, where Consuls seldom stay for long and dare not accumulate heavy possessions which are costly to move. Books weigh so much that to move even my collection from Mohammerah to—say—Isfahan would cost me £30. The F.O. house their people fairly well and have a very fine lot of men in the Consular Service, whose job it is to be lighthouses— islands of British culture, British ideas, and English civilization, in the choppy seas of foreign waters.

### CONSULS' LIBRARIES

We can all learn much more from other countries if we have access to a good library stocked with the best books and with standard works of reference. But the F.O. and, for that matter, the Government of India, do not provide books for their men in these isolated posts. Each one needs separate treatment; each should have a certain amount to spend annually on books which would be bought on charge. Over a period of years the Consular Library would become a very valuable asset. The literature on Persia in English and French is very extensive and there are all kinds of side-lines about which much has been written, often in obscure periodicals, on which a Consul should be well informed or, at least, know where to look for information. Some day I shall try my hand at a Bibliography of Persia.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *A Bibliography of Persia*, Wilson (Clarendon Press, 1930).

## CHAPTER VII

1912

### *From Isfahan to Ahwaz: Assistant to Sir Percy Cox: Arms-Traffic Problems at Muskat: Turco-Persian Frontier Questions*

I LEFT Isfahan for Ahwaz on January 1st in deep snow, travelling very light, with two servants each mounted on a mule, and one horse which I rode. No baggage save what was in the saddle-bags on which my faithful servants rode, including one 20-pound tent for them and another for myself. We pitched them end on, whenever we had to use them, so that food could be handed from one tent to another under cover. We generally found shelter for ourselves and our beasts in *caravansarais*, or in some headman's house in a village, for the cold was intense even on the Isfahan plain, which is about 6,000 feet above sea-level, and our animals would have suffered. In some places, however, both my servants and I preferred to pitch tents sooner than accept hospitality which we, in turn, involuntarily extended to fleas and other biting insects.

We travelled fairly fast, from dawn to dusk each day, until we reached the first of the three lofty passes by which this once much used track crosses the Zagros range. We were told that the snow on the higher slopes and on the summit was so deep that even an experienced guide would probably lose it; moreover, it was soft snow, and no caravan had passed for three weeks. We might have to wait for a month. My determination not to turn back was strengthened by the memory of the many friendly warnings to this effect which had been poured into my obstinate ears at Isfahan. My trusty factotum

## SNOW

sought other counsellors and at last found an old Bakhtiari who knew the road well, and himself wished to reach the low country whither his family had already gone. He promised to lead us if we would let him ride half the way; I undertook to let him ride my horse as often as he wished. He insisted that we must leave our caravan four hours before dawn, as he hoped that our beasts, being lightly laden, could be led over the snow without plunging into it. It was a clear moonlight night and I have never in all my journeyings seen a more beautiful or awe-inspiring sight than that which met my eager eyes at early dawn from the summit of the highest pass—about 9,000 feet—after four hours steady walking over crisp, crackling snow. Range after range of hills was visible in the clear air, the farthest at least 100 miles distant, 'the roseate hues of early dawn, the brightness of the day', in the words of the hymn, lent brilliance and colour for a time to these forbidding hills, utterly deserted by all life. Even my stolid Persian servants were moved by the magnificence of the view spread before them, and piously murmured 'Allah Akbar'—'God is great'—partly in recognition of the majesty of nature, partly in relief at finding that, despite the warnings and forebodings of our friends, the snow was hard enough to walk on and over.

We arrived next day at Ardal, a village set in a mountain valley where the Bakhtiari Khans of one of the leading families make their head-quarters in summer. I intended to go to the *caravansarai* like an ordinary traveller, but was told by my guide that the mother of one of the senior chiefs was in residence in the little castle there and that I should be a welcome guest. I sent my factotum ahead to ascertain whether she would care to give me a night's lodging. He came back within half-an-hour, smiling cheerfully. The *Khanum* had received him graciously; she would not permit me to go to the *sarai*;

## THE KHANUM

her house was at my disposal; her stable would receive our beasts; we should all be her guests.' We had spent the previous night in our tiny tents, upon a patch of frozen earth between two deep drifts, in a bitter wind in 20 or 30 degrees of frost, our only fire made of charcoal, brought with us, our only food dry bread, roasted eggs, and some cold meat grilled on the charcoal, our only drink tea from a samovar in which we put snow in lieu of water. No wonder he looked cheerful.

The lady was most gracious and hospitable. I was given the best room, richly carpeted and tapestried with the product of local looms, and was given a dinner worthy of a great London club. After I had dined she came to see me and, after the usual polite preliminaries, began to cross-examine me closely upon recent happenings in Tehran, Isfahan, and Shiraz, and much farther afield.

'I have never met any Persian, of either sex, better informed or so well-balanced in the expression of political views. She had met few of the leading figures upon the political stage, but knew a great deal about them, their properties, families and marital connections. She talked freely of her sons, one of whom was playing a leading and not discreditable part in Tehran, and a little of her husband, a great figure in S. Persia. Then she told me stories of her father, a famous Ilkhani of all the Bakhtiari tribes, who like her grandfather, had been treacherously murdered by a Persian Governor-General—the Zill-us-Sultan, uncle of the present Shah. Persia, she said, would not recover till the Qajars were ousted. God would decide in his own good time who should replace them. It could not be the Bakhtiari Khans, who were playing a leading part at Tehran at the moment; they would arouse bitter jealousies among other tribal leaders. The Safavi dynasty was extinct, as also, for practical purposes, were the descendants of Nadir Shah. She told me of a young man of low degree (on his father's side) who had been boasting of his descent from the royal Qajar



## FOOD AND TALK

dynasty on his mother's side. He had been silenced by her grandson, who had quoted a Bakhtiari proverb

They said to the mule, "Who was your father?"

The mule replied, "My *mother* was a Turki mare."

'After tea and coffee had been brought in, in silver urns and served in silver cups on silver trays, she withdrew, with many polite phrases, and her place was taken by her major-domo who, I suspect, had been listening at the door. The bluff, hearty old rogue came with a bottle of good Shiraz wine and two glasses, and drank with me the health of his mistress. He, too, talked politics—much less wisely; deplored the fact that I had no wife to keep me warm on a cold night like this; told me many Rabelaisian yarns of broad humour in the manner of Robert Burns or Lord Rochester—unexpurgated. My major-domo came and joined in—not to drink but to talk; then two more old butler types came up. The major-domo suggested that we all needed a little more food before we went to bed—we could not, or at least need not, start early. Better eat our fill now and start with full bellies. I agreed, and half-an-hour later enjoyed the Persian equivalent of "grilled bones"—i.e. chicken freshly killed, spatchcocked while still warm and grilled in walnut sauce and sheep's tail. They all became festive, quoted Persian poetry and told stories innumerable, as they sat round a brazier on the rich carpets and cushions of the Khan's best drawing-room, shoeless, of course, as I was, and careful not to soil anything, but completely at home—a curious blend such as one finds everywhere in Persia of equalitarian instincts underlying a society in which function is everything and status very little indeed. It was midnight before the talk died down and they left me, to write this instalment of my letter to you by candlelight, sitting on the floor by a great charcoal brazier—yet glad of my overcoat.'

We did not leave Ardal till three hours before midday; the Khanum accepted from me a pair of silver table-spoons as a memento of my visit and entrusted me with letters in her own handwriting to addresses in Shushtar and Ahwaz and Mohammerah, which I promised to send

## MALAMIR AND THE MUNGASHT

by messenger, not by the Persian Post Office, in which she had no faith.

We rode hard that day, continuing till long after dark, and again the next day, spending the night in a *sarai* without windows or doors; we had food for ourselves and our beasts and enough charcoal to cook eggs and boil some *kabab*, so we were content.

On the second day, with a great effort, we reached the Malamir plain. A bitter wind blew with such violence that it lifted fine gravel which stung like hail; then the rain came. I was less well clad than my followers and decided to walk to keep myself warm. I drew ahead of them, for, as I found out later, they had been forced to stop to renew a broken girth and my horse was lamed by a stone fixed underneath the broad plate which, in Persia, takes the place of the traditional European horse-shoe. They had to take off the plate, remove the stone, and replace the plate. The sun had set over the black Mungasht Mountain, which I had climbed two years before, when I reached the low pass which gives access to the Malamir plain. Trudging on in the dark, in heavy rain, I saw lights ahead and hoped for food and shelter; the lights went out and I saw them no more. An hour later, tired and hungry, despairing of finding shelter or of being joined by my followers, I took refuge in a rough shed. Hearing heavy breathing I struck a match which revealed some cows, lying close together. Here was warmth, which I needed more than food. I lay between them and went to sleep; when I awoke it was dawn; they had not moved. I struggled to my feet and went back to the main road; less than an hour later I saw my caravan approaching. They had fared better than I had. We wasted no time on vain regrets but pushed on to Kala Tul, a romantic little fort in the centre of a small plain at the foot of the western slopes of the Mungasht, made famous by Sir Henry Layard's account of his *Adventures*

## THE AHWAZ CONSULATE

*in Persia* published twenty years or so earlier. We baited our animals here, got some bread and buttermilk for ourselves, and pushed on to Jaru, where we were well known and well treated. To the north-west the sky by night was lit by the great flares of burning gas from the oil-wells of Masjid Sulaiman, which was rapidly becoming a commercial oilfield. The headman told me all the local gossip, much of which centred round Dr. Young, whose medical skill was doing much to reconcile the local people to the rising prices, rising wages, and other changes which such sudden developments must always bring in their train.

Next day to Wais (Shaikh Owais), a desperate long and dreary march with tired beasts over the plains of Arabistan. Here I put on clean clothes, washed and shaved, polished my saddlery and did my best to appear, next day, at the Ahwaz Consulate as if I had just returned from a morning ride. My servants did the same. I was welcomed by Capt. A. J. H. Grey of the Political Department and his new wife, who seemed relieved that it was possible to arrive looking (if not feeling) clean after so long a journey. She was a sprightly French girl who dressed, as Mrs. Dewar-Durie put it, 'better than we should advise'. Grey told me the latest news. It was not good. Disturbances were still reported from every quarter; they might spread to N. Arabistan, which was not under the control either of the Shaikh of Mohammerah or the Bakhtiari Khans. The oilfields might be affected. Anxious as we were to avoid intervention, it might be forced upon us, as in Egypt in 1881, by events over which we had no control.

I paid calls on the Deputy Governor and upon all local European residents including Ter Meulen, a stout Dutchman, who had returned from London with a pretty English wife. The telegraph lines were not working; no river steamer was due to sail for a week, so leaving my

## THE POWERS AND THE RAILWAYS

servants and the animals to rest at the Consulate, I put my small belongings upon an open sailing-boat returning to Mohammerah after disposing of a cargo of fish and salt, and went downstream hoping to catch the outward mail steamer to Bushire.

I was not disappointed; within a few hours of reaching Mohammerah the little B.I. mail steamer appeared and I boarded her at once. I found several friends on board both among the officers and the passengers.

‘(L., Jan. 15) Persia has been decaying for years. The Constitutional movement, started by men who were trying to stop the rot, has hastened it. The Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907, designed to retard it, has not succeeded. Iron bands, in the form of railways, are more likely to pierce and break it than to hold it together. Russia wants a Trans-Persian Railway to India, which would be bad for Persia and India; we want a railway from the Persian Gulf to the interior, but not to anywhere near Russia. Our position is as difficult as that of Persia, for we are also faced with the German determination to carry the Baghdad railway to the Persian Gulf via Koweit. We desire neither the break-up of Turkey nor of Persia, but can we prevent either? Weak Powers are always a peril to their neighbours; my activities in the last three years seem in retrospect rather pointless. I shall be well satisfied if I have helped (1) to establish the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, (2) to suppress the Arms Traffic, (3) to show that it is possible to construct railways (or roads) which will help Persia and not menace Indian interests.’

‘(L., Feb. 2) I leave to-morrow for Muskat after a week at Bushire with J. H. Bill, I.C.S., and his very charming and clever new wife. I am not to go at present to India but to remain in the Gulf “on special duty”, as a sort of spare horse.

‘You ask me, in your Christmas letter whether the last year has pulled me down. I can honestly say *no*; I am in good condition; and good spirits; and capable of sixteen hours work a day in an office, or the saddle for a week at a time.’

‘(L., Feb. 6) I reach Muskat to-morrow with several hundred-

## NO PROSPECT OF LEAVE

weights of files and papers which Cox, who is on his way from Calcutta, will have to deal with. I have spent twelve hours a day, not counting meals, indexing some and preparing précis of the heavier files. Reading them with an eye to my own future I can see in them the shadow of quite a lot of things to come, mostly nasty and difficult and touchy, for me to do. I may be tacked on to the Navy for Arms Traffic. I may be attached to Sir Percy for odd jobs in Persia arising out of the disturbances. I may do anything—except go on leave. Of that I see little prospect. But I do not really mind; I badly want to see you and Papa again, but there is for me a great fascination in dirty jobs that no one else wants or thinks they can do well and which I always flatter myself I could make something of.

‘We passed H.M.S. *Fox* towing a captured dhow from which they took 2,000 rifles, and the next day H.M.S. *Proserpine* which has also made big captures. The profits of the trade must be vast, for the gun-runners seem undeterred.

‘We have had rough weather, but seasickness does not affect me for more than ten minutes or so at a time, and I have been able to enjoy everything that I saw—little barren islands here and there, each with a political history of its own enshrined in our files, full of romantic episodes, pearl banks fought for by pirates, wrecked Indian dhows which when abandoned were claimed by rival owners a century ago before any other use for the islands was thought of. Now we want to put lighthouses on some; others have iron oxide, some 10,000 tons of which go every year to Europe, mostly to Germany of late years. And the pearl banks—whom do they belong to? They are far beyond the three-mile limit, but would be ruined if over-dredged by modern machinery in the hands of greedy Europeans who would treat them like Americans treat forests—make money quickly and leave desolation behind them. The pearling industry is a principal means of livelihood for great numbers of Arabs whom we have pledged ourselves to protect against the outside world and each other, on condition that they do not revert to piracy. There was a time when Arab dhows were a match for any ships of the Royal Navy in speed and fighting capacity.

## THE PERSIAN GULF

‘Nothing I have ever seen is more impressive than the Musandam Peninsula, a great wedge of black volcanic rock which divides the Persian Gulf from the Gulf of Oman. It rises sheer from deep water to a height of 3,000 feet or so. Its heart is penetrated by a deep inlet or fiord called Elphin-stone Inlet on our charts. Not long ago the Indo-European Telegraph Department established a cable relay station upon a rocky waterless island in the centre. One day it was burned down and rebuilt upon Henjam Island on the opposite coast, a far less torrid and desolate spot. The people who expected telegraph clerks to live on that lonely rock must have lacked all humanity. The inlet is so deep and the sides so sheer that the largest vessels can go alongside; so vast that the whole British fleet could ride in it at anchor.

‘The sea is so phosphorescent at night that one can almost see to read by the light of the foam at the ship’s bows; every wavelet has a silver crest visible miles away so that when a breeze starts the whole sea is lit up. There is fish in abundance and sharks for the catching; the fisherfolk on the coast make a living by catching them with hook and bait, and pressing oil from the livers. The meat is quite eatable—I have tried it—and shark skin is as good as the very finest leather for shoes and some other purposes, for it is three-ply and full of oil. Every foreland and cliff is known to Arabs by one name and to mariners by another. *The Persian Gulf Pilot*, a matter-of-fact guide to Mariners which I have been reading, contains the raw material for half a dozen great sea stories. In these waters the English fought first the Portuguese and then the Dutch and finally the Arab pirates. On these shores British and Indian troops also fought the same enemies and conquered. Baffin, the discoverer of the Bay, was killed on Hormuz Island. We have paid a heavy price for the order that now reigns and got little out of it ourselves, for it is open to the commerce of all nations and we enjoy no sort of preferential rights. But I must not continue in this strain—you can read it all in Curzon’s *Persia* and in Lovat Fraser’s *Lord Curzon in India*.

‘The news that Mona is one of the Insurance Commissioners appointed under the National Health Insurance Act fills me

## RETURN TO INDIA 'EARLY IN APRIL'

with pride. I shall introduce myself in Whitehall in years to come in many circles as her brother, just as I can commend myself to great numbers of people by saying that I am the son of—the H.M. of Clifton or the Archdeacon of Manchester or the Vicar of Rochdale or a Canon of Worcester or—*tout court*—James Wilson.

'If I ever visit S. Africa I shall proclaim myself as "the brother of Edward Wilson—Sir Godfrey Lagden's Deputy, you know"; and in scholastic circles I shall say, with easy assurance "my brother Hugh is modern language master at Rugby". And I do not doubt that one day I shall be able in some circle or another proudly to claim that Margaret Wilson is my sister and Steuart Wilson a brother of mine.'

'(L., Feb. 24) I am still on board the *Lawrence* with Sir Percy and Lady Cox and two of her relations who declare my Arab servant to be "too picturesque", the Arab Shaikhs to be "romantic old dears with dusters on their heads held on by ropes". I see little of them, however, being surrounded by papers marked "Immediate"—"Urgent"—or "Early"—"for signature"—"draft for approval"—"for orders"—and so on. Capt. Lorimer wrote privately to Cox asking that I relieve him when he went on leave, which was good of him; but the same mail brought a letter from the Foreign Department demanding my return to India. Cox said *no* to the first and "early in April" to the second.'

'(L., Mar. 20) I am at Bushire as Second Secretary and, the First being ill, have plenty to do. J. B. Wood, of the Foreign Department, has been inspecting us and has reported that this particular office does more work than any office in India of twice the size and three times the cost, and should be more adequately staffed. Cox suggested that I might stay till this happened, but the Government of India refused and I have final orders to be in Bareilly in April. I suppose these uprootings are good for one, but I don't like it a bit. Every successive change since I was seven has hurt me at the time—from Clifton (where I was born) to Rochdale—from the National School at Rochdale in turn to Mostyn House School, Clifton College, R.M.C. Sandhurst, 62nd Wilts. Regt.—32nd Pioneers—Oilfields—Mohammerah. I become attached

## A SUBTERRANEAN KINGDOM

catlike to places and people and especially to Cox. Lady Cox told me this week that Sir Percy had spent less time in the office since I took over, and looked less worried than of old, and said that he had told her that "Wilson never forgets and never lets me down", which from him, even at second-hand, is high praise.

'Wood left yesterday. The Director of Persian Gulf Telegraphs comes to-morrow and there are a lot of papers to be prepared for consideration. So I am much immersed in work, though my thoughts are occasionally elsewhere, for I have only a fortnight more under the surface of the diplomatic world which is a subterranean kingdom with its own rules and conventions, its own Kings (and Queens), princes and courtiers, but no subjects—except "devils" like me.

'Wishing to double my insurance policies I have been medically examined and passed A 1 with honours—exceptionally fit in all respects.

'A pleasant incident last week, typical of international relations here, was the arrival of a German girl to be married to a young German employed by a Hamburg firm, R. Wonchhaus & Co. The German Consul is unmarried and a bit of a boor; he asked Lady Cox to take charge of her. The girl was her guest for the best part of a week, and Lady Cox also arranged a reception and several dinner-parties to give her a good send-off. She was much more attractive than her fiancé but that, I suppose, is true of most brides—it certainly will be said of mine.

'Another visitor was Lord Lamington, a Liberal peer and ex-Governor of Bombay who has come to investigate "the present deplorable state of affairs in Persia". He sees everything through English political spectacles—and summarizes it in phrases suited to a political speech. He pictures Persian politicians as having much the same background as the English kind and the phrases and public aims having as much (or as little) behind them as in England. His discussions with Cox revealed him as naïvely anxious to get material for speeches—or to answer other people's speeches. What actually happens or might happen was of secondary interest. He is intelligent, cultivated, courtly, but much out of place in this part of the world.'



## GOODBYE TO BUSHIRE

‘(L., *Apr. 6*) I have said good-bye to Bushire—almost with tears. I have packed my boxes, nailed up all my Persian MSS. and books, diaries and maps. I have parted with servants who have served me well for nearly 5 years, but have given them a retaining fee to ensure their returning. Though they would do so anyway; but it would not be fair to take advantage of their loyalty. Eight packing-cases were wanted for my books and ten for household goods which I had to buy at Mohammerah but could not sell to my successor, who had his own stuff.

‘I have been to Koweit and Mohammerah as bear-leader to Lamington and his party. I feel sorry for him. He wants to do good and help everyone, but does not know the ABC of Persian politics. He is going by road to Isfahan and will be very uncomfortable. So venerable a figure deserves a better fate, and it is sporting of him to be so determined to see things for himself. I have provided him with guide-books and maps, tents and furniture, a cook and servant (my own!), and I think he is grateful and hope that he is to some extent converted to our local outlook.

‘While at Mohammerah I saw something of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which is making great progress. Walpole and his No. 2 Jacks are doing well. Soane is a great success. Charles Ritchie, who is just finishing the pipe-line is, as usual, quarrelling with everyone. He is an able man and a good engineer with a flair for new things and new uses for old things. He is buying an aeroplane in the hope that he will be able to supervise the pipe-line with or in it. He is using a Darracq motor-car, the first in this part of the world, very successfully. The best man under him—out of a very good lot—is J. Jameson, who is in charge of the erection of a pumping-station at Kut Abdullah south of Ahwaz—also a Scot, but far better at handling men and therefore affairs. Whatever happens to all the other matters I have dealt with in this part of the world I shall, I am sure, always be proud of having helped to start the Oil Company on sound lines. It is true that the existence of the Company with an oilfield 120 miles inland and a long pipe-line to the refinery at Abadan below Mohammerah on the Shatt al Arab commits our

## A WEEK IN INDIA

Government in the ultimate resort to intervention in order to prevent it from being impeded or destroyed. But we also have general strategic interests, due to our responsibilities in India and the oilfields give us a good *locus standi*.

'I wish G. B. Reynolds were here as General Manager. He would have appreciated the new régime both here and in London, for he was a gentleman and was always at his best when dealing with his own kind.'

'(L., Apr. 18. Karachi) Before I went ashore here from the mail steamer I was handed a telegram telling me not to go up country but to await orders. I inquired what this portended and was told that "proposals involving your temporary return to the Gulf are before Government and have been referred to the Foreign Office".

'This is really rather hard. Ever since I left Mohammerah a week ago I have been reading nothing but the Indian Penal Code, the Indian Excise and Treasury Regulations, Standing Orders of the Indian Political Department, and so on. I have worked myself up to become quite an enthusiastic student of Treasury Regulations and have been polishing my rusty Hindustani. I have paid heavily to bring all my kit here; I have sold a lot of old gear which, if I return, I shall have to replace by new. However, I am merely a small mule in a long team such as the A.P.O.C. use to drag Lancashire boilers to the oilfields, and have no right to complain.'

I went at once to the Sind Club, which was comfortable and simple, got myself made an honorary member, and found several friends. I borrowed a mount and went out riding the first morning, bathed in the sea, and went boating with a cock and hen party in the afternoon, after paying some formal calls. I was invited to a dinner-party the same evening and another the next day.

'I cannot bring myself to open a book until I know where I am going. A week in India does not make me anxious to stay. The noise and dust and mercenary ways of everyone—daily papers full of foul advertisements, posters in the streets, ostentatious shops selling poor quality stuff under high-

## RETURN TO MUSKAT

sounding names—compare unfavourably with Arab dignity and Persian good manners.’

A few days later I was told to return to Muskat, there to meet Sir Percy Cox, where I should receive further instructions. I left Karachi by the fast mail steamer a few hours later, after placing my belongings in safe deposit. I had packed with a view to reopening the cases within a few weeks. They remained in store for several years, for I never again had a roof over my head for more than a few months at a time till early in 1916, by which time my carpets and other woollen fabrics had been completely consumed by many generations of moths.

‘(L., Apr. 22) It was not a comfortable journey as I had to surrender my cabin to a Frenchwoman who came on board in tears and a dressing-gown at the last moment, with a vast quantity of luggage, saying she was the wife of the French Consul at Baghdad: she turned out to be his wife’s maid. However, I should have had to let her have the cabin anyway. I slept on deck and used the Third Engineer’s cabin to dress in, he being an old friend from 1907.

‘I saw this morning a school of 500 or more porpoises leaping out of the water followed by a school of whales. I suppose that both were pursuing the same shoal of fish. Their brown skins glistened marvellously in the light of the rising sun. Then, clad only in shorts, I began to run round the deck, to find it blocked on one side by a retired Indian Rajah on his way to Karbala. His chief barber was chafing his legs; his coffee man was in attendance; a woman, heavily veiled, sat holding his hand—his wife, I suppose; while two professional story-tellers were droning in unison some passages from the Koran. I am glad I was not sleeping in the deck cabin behind the port-holes under which they sat. It was the cabin I had given up to the lady. A few minutes later two Arab horse-dealers came on deck on their way back to Mosul from Bombay with their four little sons, aged 6 to 10 years. I had long talks with them, first about horses, then about Turks and Persians and Kurds. Their servant brought coffee

## PORPOISES AND CAMELS

and biscuits. I practised Arabic on them and they told me scores of stories and proverbs. Two deserve to be recorded.

'Once upon a time Solomon was in the Persian Gulf in a rowing-boat. Dabbling his hand in the water as landsmen do, he dropped his ring. To a porpoise, which drew near, Solomon, who knew the language of all created things, said:

"Porpoise, find my ring."

"Upon my head, upon my eyes, O Lord Solomon," said the porpoise, "I will search for it."

'After a while he returned.

"I cannot find it," said he.

"Go on looking," said Solomon.

"It's vain to look for it," said the porpoise, after a long search. Solomon was wrath.

"Go on looking till you find it," said he.

'Ever since then whenever the porpoise sees a ship, he starts diving in and leaping out of the water and comes close to the ship to tell Solomon, who might be on board, that the ring has not yet been found!

\* \* \*

'Why does the camel look so supercilious as it strides down the street, as its "eyelids try the children of men"? Why are there no wild camels, nor ever were, though there are wild prototypes of all other tame beasts?

'This is why. Once upon a time there was a family of Shaikhs so proud that they would not say "There is no god but God": they said "There is no God—there is none more wise more powerful than we." God sent one messenger after another to warn them to say "There is no god but God", but they rejected their counsel. So at last God made them into beasts of burden.

'And that is why they stalk so proudly down the street; that is why alone of all beasts they groan and grumble when burdens are laid upon them; that is why, alone of all beasts, they will never give in but go on till they drop in their tracks. And, obstinate as the Shaikhs they once were, if you listen to them as they eat their evening meal together from a cloth spread on the ground, you will hear them murmuring in their throats to each other "La Illah"—"La Illah"—There is no God.

## THE TURCO-PERSIAN FRONTIER

‘In the afternoon I invited the Arab boys to take tea with me all by themselves—a most successful party.’

On arrival I went off to the Agency, where Major Knox of the Political Department reigned, with his wife, and asked for orders; I was told to wait for Cox. An hour later Admiral Sir A. E. Bethell, the Naval C.-in-C. on the E. India Station, came in the flagship from Koweit, where he had assisted at the investiture of Shaikh Mubarak with the K.C.I.E. I went off to call and asked him whether he knew why I had been sent for. He told me at once that the whole question of the Turco-Persian Frontier was now a live issue between the two countries, who proposed to ask Britain and Russia to arbitrate between them and to delimit the whole frontier.

‘British interests are closely concerned at two points: (1) near Khanikin where there are oilfields over which the D’Arcy Exploration Company has a concession and where the frontier is unsettled and (2) the Shatt al Arab. Of the former I know nothing yet. The latter I studied very closely when at Mohammerah, made a lot of maps and a detailed historical report, at a time when the whole question was dormant and so was fairly easy to consider impartially. Cox endorsed my contentions, so also the Government of India and the India Office, though the Foreign Office did not commit itself. Now that Abadan is to become a great port and there is even talk of dredging the bar, the Turks are asserting their *de jure* rights under the Treaty of Erzerum against the *de facto* position which has grown up during the last forty years. The Foreign Office have accepted my thesis in substance and put it to the Turks, who are disputing it on some points of detail as well as upon principle at one or two points. I am required to act as the local expert. The first idea was to send me home to advise the F.O., which would have been glorious; but it was thought that this would take too long and it was decided to send me to make further investigations which will not take long. After that, I suppose, India.

## AN ANGLO-GERMAN DISPUTE

'Captain Lorimer's wife is here (at Muskat) on her way to join him at Bahrain. She is very good company, so I took the slow mail with her to Bahrain, going ashore at Jashk and Bandar Abbas and later to Dibai and Lingun, arriving on May 4th at Basrah, where I spent a night with the Crows. His ideal is a quiet life, and good local relations. He swears that *I* have disinterred the Frontier Question and am putting Persia's claims (which are in the interests of the A.P.O.C.) far too high.

'I joined Cox again yesterday. He told me much that Bethell had said—said he felt I was rather hardly used in being pulled back but should regard it as a compliment. He added that his and my positions were now stronger: "We have submitted with a good grace to your return to India and events have overruled us and the Government of India. I have stipulated that your inability to take your training shall not impair your right to leave next year."

'I suggested that I should spend a fortnight here on investigations: he said *no*. Now I was back he wanted me to be his Personal Assistant for a time to help him handle an Anglo-German dispute (as to the rights of a German firm, Messrs. Wonchhaus, to iron oxide in certain disputed islands in the Persian Gulf) which the German Government have agreed, at our suggestion, to refer to the Hague.

'I helped him last year to prepare the brief, a very formidable document, a study of which convinced the Germans that their case was not as strong as they thought. They have put forward a counter-case to which we have to find an answer—a most interesting bit of work and much to my liking. He promises that if anyone goes home to help the lawyers who will conduct the case at the Hague it shall be me.'

'(L., May 21. *Muskat*) It was said of Muskat 300 years ago that diamonds in scabbards were consumed by the heat, and the gazelles could be found lying roasted in the plains. This is no great exaggeration. I have never felt the heat so much. It is moist heat, like a Turkish bath. I am indoors all day cyphering and typing telegrams, for we have had to land troops at Bandar Abbas owing to local disturbances, and things are bad at Shiraz, and difficult at Karman. Our tele-

## ANTI-GUN-RUNNING

graph bill is £500 a month, and there are Arms Traffic questions, upon which Cox has the last word. I have been out with the Navy on steam tugs, the *Mashona* and *Harold*, on anti-gun-running business and have played a humble but interesting part in a few engagements. The spirit of the officers and men in these very small craft is an inspiration to any landsman. They are more uncomfortable than any civilian ever is in the worst prison or in an excursion train, and they find it hard to get food cooked, but, though they curse, they never grumble.'

'(L., June 1) I am still at Muskat, my life having been made miserable by a boil under the ankle. The Residency Surgeon would not lance it so when I thought the time had come I heated a sharp penknife blade in a candle and then plunged it in myself, with immediate relief to me. But the doctor was indignant at such quackery.

'I wish I could write you letters worthy of yours, but I have no existence here worthy of the name beyond the office in which I sit, the table at which I eat and the bed on which I sleep, on the roof, naked save for a towel over the loins. Meat is scarce and poor here; not so fish—twenty varieties at least, all good eating, and dozens of little oysters from "the Consul's rock" just outside the harbour whence they can be brought fresh at one hour's notice.'

'(L., June 6. R.I.M.S. Survey Ship *Investigator*) I am on my way back with Cox to Bushire where—joyful thought—six weeks mail awaits me. We have devised a legal means of outwitting the French arms dealers—we have convinced the Foreign Office that it was legally sustainable and they have decided to back it diplomatically. We have, in fact, killed the Arms Traffic; my share in it, though small, has been large enough to make me feel that I have done more constructive work in a month here as Cox's P.A. than in a year on my own, which shows what manner of man he is in his relations with his office boy!

'Moreover the Turco-Persian Frontier question has been carried a step further. The Viceroy himself [Lord Hardinge] took a hand and though, as a former Permanent Under-Secretary of State, very chary of differing from his former

## SURVEYING IN THE DESERT

associates on matters so technical, he has come out wholeheartedly in support of Cox's thesis.

'We have caught several sharks; one was so big that the  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch iron barbed hook in its jaws was straightened out and we had to shoot it. It was 10 feet long and gave the crew steaks as big as any sirloin.'

'(L., June 28) I am back in Mohammerah after three weeks surveying of the quite unknown desert country and marshes between Ahwaz and Amarah and the desert between Basrah and Hawizah. It is the very height of the hot weather—105° or more in the shade from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and 160° in the sun, but fairly cool at night. It is healthy and bracing after the damp heat of the Gulf and it has been extraordinarily interesting. I met a man who claimed to be 120 years old; he looked a centenarian at least but had a clear eye and good complexion and a set of new teeth—his third set. I was assured that this is not unusual after 90 or so among these healthy people whose sole food—and it is very good—is barley bread and buffalo milk or curds, and rice with a little tough meat on rare occasions. The Beni Turuf tribe are at the moment on good terms with the Shaikh of Mohammerah, whose letters of introduction were a passport. Out in the desert, 30 miles from the Karun or Shatt al Arab, I found two great square towers of burned brick—called Kushk-i-Basrah and Kushk-i-Hawizah. I was told that the frontier ran somewhere between them; who built them and why no one could say; they did not look very old and this area has been desert for centuries. Yet there was a time in the far distant past when it was seamed with great canals the traces of whose banks may still be seen. They run across and over a yet older system of canals which can be traced only by the colour of the soil which is darker in what was once the bed of the canals, as it holds salt which in turn retains moisture. There are traces of date groves 10 miles north of Basrah in what is now barren desert. I saw a pair of great hyena which had been making a meal off a carcass of a buffalo: they had cracked and crushed the great thigh bones as easily as a terrier breaks the rib of a mutton chop.

'In the marshes I sometimes waded naked, in the sun,



sometimes swam the creeks with men carrying my plane table and notebooks, my dumpy level and staves. Sometimes I went about in a little *mashhufs*, made of reeds, coated like Noah's Ark with pitch (bitumen) from Hit on the Euphrates above the latitude of Baghdad. They are made with very long, tall prows which cleave the reeds and are poled by half-naked Arabs with long reeds through a maze of narrow passages. There are very few mosquitoes in these marshes because, I suppose, fish eat the larvae; I saw wild boars in plenty—jackal, foxes, porcupine and great herds of gazelle, beautiful animals. They drop their young in the spring in the most remote parts of the desert; within three or four days the kids can go as fast as their mothers, outpacing any horse—a beautiful sight. Another ever memorable sight and sound is the sandgrouse in flocks of many thousands coming to the river to drink. Having drunk their fill they enter the water and soak their breast feathers. Then they fly back 10 or 20 miles to their young who draw their infant beaks through the downy breasts of male or female birds and thus get the water they need. I have seen tamed sandgrouse doing this in captivity. All birds here stick closely to their nests during the heat of the day, to protect eggs and young from the heat, which would be fatal to both, but leave them at dawn and dusk for quite long periods. I have walked at dusk through nesting grounds of sandgrouse where clutches of eggs were littering the ground; a week later I went to the same place at dawn. It was alive with tiny birds; at midday the sandgrouse were there and would not move till one almost stepped on them.

‘I have finished this job and am likely to go back to Bushire as Private Secretary to Cox, which I shall like very well. It is the best training in the world and Lady Cox is most kind and keeps a very good table. I am taking her some cases of fruit and a lot of live ducks: they are a bit cheaper and a lot fatter here than at Bushire. This is an anticipation of the A.D.C. side of the job. A lot of officers I know jeer at the A.D.C. and think he should not be expected to be at the beck and call of his chief's wife. Those who take this view do not understand the true position: a Resident or (e.g.) a General

### THE C.M.G. AND OTHER MEDALS

and his wife living together are a single "operational unit". The best way an A.D.C. can help his chief is to help his wife, if asked, in matters which she would otherwise want her husband to attend to—e.g. order of precedence at table, buying things, explaining some ceremonial matter to servants, arranging a dance, telephoning and so on. When I was last at Bushire and Lady Cox had been using me a good deal, Sir Percy put it all, as usual, in a phrase:

"Someone has to help my wife out on these occasions; you are taking a load off my shoulders as well as hers, and enable me to get down to business."

(*L., July 11. Bushire*) Thank you both for your telegram of congratulation on my C.M.G. Anticipation of your pleasure was the greater part of my own satisfaction. I am of course delighted, but I am bound to admit that it was a complete and entire surprise, so much so that when the Minister on July 1st sent me a telegram announcing it I assumed that it had been sent to me by mistake, wrote on it "wrong address" and sent it back to the Telegraph Office and forgot all about it. A week later he asked me for an acknowledgement and I had to explain lamely that I thought there had been a mistake—rather hard on him as I owe it entirely to him as the Government of India when the suggestion was made hinted (repeating to Cox) that I was too junior to be decorated. I shall be the youngest C.M.G. on the list. I have the Delhi Durbar Medal and the prospect (with Sir Percy Cox and one or two other officers of the Department) of a Naval gun-running medal if one is issued. So I begin with three on my breast. Medals or rather medal ribbons are a form of male vanity and are much coveted; it is mostly a matter of luck and I have been very lucky. On the other hand, having been thus marked out at 28 it will be very hard indeed for me not to stick to this part of the world. I shall become a Persian expert but, at heart, I still hanker after the NW. Frontier and Baluchistan and India, which I have always felt to be a bigger world, though this part of the world is growing larger.

'In your last letter you tell how you met Colonel Sawyer in a Swiss hotel by pure chance and how he overheard you talking about Bakhtiari hills. It is as strange a coincidence

## A GREAT TALKER

as when you walked up a Swiss mountain eight years ago and on top met Agnew, Deputy Commissioner in Rawal Pindi, with whom I had been dining three months earlier. Sawyer's *Report on the Bakhtiari* country is a classic; I have pored over every page scores of times, and crossed and re-crossed his path, checked and added to his maps, which were very good. No one but Lorimer and Ranking and I have visited his haunts since he left them.'

'(L., July 18) I kept my 28th birthday here and Lady Cox who does her best to stand *in loco parentis* to the P.A., as I am called for short, had a birthday cake with twenty-eight cherries (not candles—they would not stand the heat). I have got my orders to stay in this job till June next when, after six full years here, I may have 3½ months at home. *In dulci júbilo*:

'I have never been so comfortable before and never shall be again till long after I am married and perhaps not then. A little bachelor house of my own; meals *en famille*—beautifully served—cold drinks—and a very good table—all free. No minor worries, so one can give one's best to the work. In return to play A.D.C. to Lady Cox and look after him: *custodem custodiam* is my motto and he is a man it is a joy to work for. He has a rare gift of humorous laconic, that is to say Spartan, expression. We had here to-day a very voluble member of the Department with immense schemes "on broad lines" in many directions. When he left Cox turned to me and said: "Now we can get back to normal; you check the Stationery Indent and I will soothe the nerves of the parrot"—a great talker.

'Office hours are 10-12 a day, sometimes 14. Meals regular and never hurried: Lady Cox sees to that. Plenty of time for sleep. A horse or two and walking for exercise. I am as fit as I have ever been in the hills or deserts. Sir P. leaves more and more to me; Lady C. sees more of him; he plays more tennis (which I do not) and rides more and, incidentally, she sees less of me.'

'(L., Sept. 1) All goes smoothly in my life but not in the diplomatic underworld. I told you we had killed the Arms Traffic; so we have, but the French object on legalistic

## VARIETY OF WORK

grounds and everyone is telegraphing at immense length and I have to do all the coding and de-coding. We here can sit back, however, for now that the Government of India and the India Office are satisfied that the traffic can be stopped they see vast economies (£1 million a year) in prospect. The Admiralty are equally glad, for anti-gun-running patrols could not go on for ever. I hope the French will take it to the Hague. I might be sent as an expert, which would be a glorious jaunt. I love Europe.'

'(L., *Sept. 15*) The variety of work here is extraordinary. This month Sir P. has on the office slips, ready for launching,

- (a) a dissertation on the Slave Trade (my job)
- (b) criticism of plans of new Residency Steam Yacht
- (c) draft of an Order in Council (my job)
- (d) criticism of plans for eight lighthouses and Wireless plant at three points

—and so on, apart from daily routine. We have a good reputation as an office, and Cox as a wise judge, so nearly everything relating to the Middle East comes here, with scores of pages of Foreign Office Print. It is a fine place to learn one's job and the office is so arranged as to make work at high speed possible, lots of light and air. We are in one big room divided by great pillars. We have separate exits and a common entrance and good rooms in which either of us can interview callers.

'Pan Islamism is again being talked of. It can never become a movement of importance. Shiahhs and Sunnis have very little in common and Indian Moslems are looked on as suspect in view of their Hindu surroundings. The Amir of Afghanistan's pedestal is shaky; so also the thrones of the Shah and the Sultan and the Khedive.'

'(L., *Oct. 1*) Luristan Railways are again to the fore and I may be sent up there again to help a British survey party to get through; I should rather like to lead an independent existence for a time though I am happy enough here and learning a lot. Cox goes down Gulf next week and has allowed Lady Cox to spring-clean the office provided I am there to see that things go back where they belong.

## THE TURCO-BALKAN WAR

'The Turco-Balkan war is not, to my mind, a disaster. The lives lost will not be wasted if, in the end, Turks no longer bear rule over Christians. The Balkan States are on balance anti-German and fighting Turkey will make them even more so.'

'(To my father) I am delighted at your success in providing Worcester with playing-grounds. Open spaces are not the lungs of a city unless one cannot merely breathe in them but also exercise one's lungs to the full by running or playing games or, in the case of children, shouting loudly. I should find it hard to work with a Committee even on such a matter. There are no Committees here; decisions are made by one man on the basis of material and evidence and views supplied by many others.'

'(L., Dec. 26) Cox invited six more people to dinner and forgot to tell Lady C. I knew but did not tell her, presuming he had done so, and was, quite properly, blamed for a bad lapse on my part. But the dinner, twenty-nine in all, went off well. She is a great hostess. I was tied to my table all day by cypher telegrams and petty urgencies.'

The year 1912 ended with the death of Captain Eckford of the 39th C.I.H. (see p. 196) at the hands of tribesmen on the Shiraz road. I liked him greatly and we had corresponded regularly.

'My best friends have been unfortunate. Lorimer and Smart wounded. Eckford killed like young Gwatkin, in a frontier raid.'

The position in Persia had not been improved by our half-hearted measures; we should have done better had we done nothing. Russia also sent troops into N. Persia; their brutality and high-handed methods caused much resentment, but *oderint dum metuant* was their motto, and though hated by a few they were feared by all.

'The Swedish gendarmerie officers have arrived—blue-eyed, yellow-haired men like Germans; well mannered and well-meaning, but not likely to succeed. They are engaged in enlisting some of the worst local scoundrels.'

## PERSIA WORSE THAN EVER

I thus summarized in my diary the year from my own point of view:

'I have had more new jobs, in and out of doors, more training in office work and diplomatic methods. I have seen more, and more kinds of people here than I could ever have seen in India. The Arms Traffic is nearing its end. The south end of the Turco-Persian Frontier looks like being settled on the lines originally suggested. The Oil Company is going ahead—the one really practical large-scale development with which I have been associated. Persia itself is worse than at any previous time in my memory; we have failed to improve matters, though we have spent a great deal of money and made many enemies.'

## CHAPTER VIII

JANUARY—AUGUST 1913

### *Home on leave to England: As a Stoker: To Constantinople and to Tehran via Tiflis and Baku.*

THE Persian Railway Syndicate Ltd., a British group headed by Messrs. Pearson, who had an option from the Persian Government for a concession to build a railway from the Persian Gulf to Burujird on the plateau, had for some months been pressing for leave to send a survey party along an alignment which among others I had originally suggested. They could hope for no aid from the Persian Government and asked that a political officer should be sent with them to smooth the way. The Government of India asked Sir Percy Cox to suggest someone for this task. I asked to be chosen.

‘Not that I want to go into that nest of vipers again, but having been through before without disaster I am the obvious person to go again. It is not financially attractive: I should be better off here. The prospect of bear-leading a party of British surveyors with no previous experience of Persia and, probably, with strong ingrained prejudices against Persian food and ways, is repellent. They will insist on wearing English clothes and will probably have a vast train of baggage. However, I have applied to go, and Cox has recommended that I should be sent. If they say “no—Wilson must go and learn Indian Law, Excise and Treasury” I shall not mind at all. I shall have done my duty by volunteering and I shall go on leave with a light heart; the work here is incessant and the hours long and I have had five full years of it without a day’s leave.’

A fortnight later the Government of India nominated me for the Luristan survey with permission to go on leave first; to return via Tehran and Luristan to Dizful

## THE BAKHTIARI KHANS

where, in October, I was to meet the survey party which would spend the next winter and spring upon the survey, under my general guidance. I was first to go to Dizful to make preliminary studies and arrangements.

I was, however, delayed by fresh troubles at Bushire. An attempt was made by a Persian, under the influence of the heady wine of Constitutionalism, to murder the Belgian Director of Customs. He escaped, but his wife was shot dead. She had just returned from dinner at the Residency and I had sat next to her. A few hours later, at 3 a.m., I was ciphering telegrams to Tehran and Delhi reporting the murder. It might be the precursor of other attempts, and it was necessary to devise such practical measures as would reassure foreign residents without committing ourselves to 'intervention'.

I went first to see the Bakhtiari Khans at Ab-bid on the Karun River above Shushtar.

'Big men with big escorts and small minds—but able as no one else to keep the tribes they govern from fighting with each other or, to any considerable extent, with their neighbours. Their faults are many, but they have made it possible for the oil company to develop their Oilfield at Masjid Sulaiman without a day's interruption of work. That would have been quite impossible anywhere else in Persia except, of course, Arabistan, where the Shaikh of Mohammerah is supreme.

'My only fear is that their ambitions may lead them into courses which they have not the strength or inward unity to pursue to a successful conclusion. A Bakhtiari is now Governor-General of Isfahan, another of Luristan; there are Bakhtiaris in the Government in Tehran. They have not the capacity to fill all these responsible posts successfully; they have no clearly defined long-range objects. Each post is taken (or refused) on its (mainly financial) merits and never yet held for long. My talk with them was altogether friendly and we had much in common. They were, as always, courteous, hospitable and genial, but offered me



## DEMARCATIION OF FRONTIER

little encouragement. A railway through Luristan would

- (1) increase the power of the Central Government in SW. Persia to levy taxes, which would be spent elsewhere, mainly in the Capital, by men with no interest whatever in the welfare or interests of the people of SW. Persia.
- (2) assist Russia to extend her sphere of influence and to bring if need be military pressure to bear upon Persia right down to the Gulf.
- (3) would imperil, in this way, the safety of the Persian oilfields.

‘They thought I should certainly fail to get a survey party through Luristan.’

I went on next day to Dizful whence I wrote (April 4th):

‘A feud has broken out between rival factions in the town which is not making my task easier, for each party has its own friends and enemies among the tribes. While I was negotiating agreements for the survey party which has just reached Mohammerah, I heard that I have been appointed as Deputy British Commissioner to an International Commission which is to “delimit” and “demarcate” the Turco-Persian Frontier from Fao to Ararat. Over the greater part of the length—some 700 miles—the line follows watersheds or rivers, or crosses barren stretches of desert. There we have only to “demarcate”, i.e. put up boundary pillars and mark them on maps provided by the surveyors who will accompany us. There are some stretches, however, where the frontier line has to be settled; the two limitrophe Powers have agreed that the frontier lies between two dotted lines, some 20 or 30 miles apart. We have to decide precisely where it lies; in the event of disagreement between the Turkish and Persian Commissioners the British and Russian Commissioners have been invested with arbitral powers to reach a decision on the spot. If they disagree, the British and Russian Governments will impose a decision. The British Commissioner is to be Mr. A. C. Wratislaw, C.B., of the British (Levant) Consular Service, the Russian Commissioner, M. V. Minorsky, a Russian diplomat of distinction who was Private Secretary to the

## GOING HOME

Governor-General of the Caucasus and is now at the Russian Embassy in Constantinople. All this is, however, provisional and confidential until the Turkish and Persian Governments have given their formal consent both to the arrangements made and the individuals to be appointed.

‘I am to go home at once; make all arrangements with the Foreign Office and the India Office for the equipment of the Commission, which will have an escort of Indian, Russian, Turkish and Persian Cavalry, and Surveyors likewise from each country represented. I am then to go to Constantinople to meet the Persian and Turkish representatives and thence to Tehran with the same object. I shall then try my luck through Luristan, beginning at the northern end, make arrangements for the survey party’s safe conduct and start them on their journey. Then back to Mohammerah and take up my new post as Deputy Commissioner, and work up the frontier from Fao on the Shatt al Arab to Mount Ararat in the Caucasus. Then I am solemnly promised a tour of duty in India *without* previous training (O joy!) in Law and Excise, Administration and Treasury management, on the honourable understanding that I will acquire a knowledge of these subjects in what is commonly but hitherto erroneously described as my “spare time”.’

In a separate letter, which contrasted oddly with these weighty plans conveyed to us in the names of Sir Edward Grey (F.O.), Mr. John Morley (I.O.), the Government of India, the Imperial Russian Government, the Sublime Porte, and the Imperial Persian Government, came a private letter from Sir Percy Cox to me, in his own handwriting, saying that he hoped I would do another fortnight as his P.A. before going home, as ‘there are a number of loose ends to be tied up on the many subjects you have made your own here. This has been a memorable year for me; you have enabled me to get down to my work here as never before, and have thrown light upon many obscure points that wanted clearing up. Nearly all our encyclopaedic memoranda are now com-

plete, and another fortnight's work will enable me to see you off, not with a light heart, for I shall miss you, but with resignation.' He added that 'the Arms Traffic is moving quickly towards a settlement, which I hope will be really final and there is talk of a conference in Paris to which I should like to nominate you, if it does not clash with your other jobs. You will want some leave, but duty in Paris will, I suspect, be as good as leave to you.'

I went back to Bushire, stopping on the way at Ahwaz, where I stayed with Charles Ritchie of the A.P.O.C. whom I thus described in my diary.

'Ritchie is one of the most remarkable men I have come across. He is very tall and strong, very ready to strike Arabs and Persians and Indians who offend him but not, at heart, a bully, for he is equally truculent to his superiors. He is a tireless worker, bent upon finishing the pipe-line well ahead of schedule. Not content with introducing motor-cars to speed up work he brought out an aeroplane which he tried to fly; it crashed to the ground after a short flight; whereupon he dismantled it and stored it in his cellar. In a country where time is not regarded as one of the dimensions of excellence, he worships speed, which means time to him, to the exclusion of everything else. He has a good head for figures and keeps a close watch on costs, but spoils his work by bad temper and does not get the best out of his staff in consequence. But he has introduced, and justified, a new standard of personal comfort for himself and those under him. He has no use for the rather Spartan tradition inherited from Reynolds and derides my own belief in its virtue. He has not spared money to make his own house comfortable—he hired the best house in Ahwaz, built by the Shaikh's son, far better than any Consulate—and furnished it richly. He writes little, telephones much; demands his own way imperiously and if trouble threatens expects the rest of the world—including me—to come to his aid—which we generally do. He has something of Reynolds in him, but without his experience of men and things. J. Jameson, another Scotsman,

### WORKING HIS PASSAGE

who works under him, is a better man, with great powers of growth and a much more reliable judge of men of all sorts and conditions.'

Ritchie died in harness that year. His place was taken by Jameson, who is now (1940) a Director of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.

After a busy fortnight at Bushire I regretfully said farewell to Sir Percy and Lady Cox, but gladly saw, from the deck of the mail steamer, the sandy wastes of Persia fade on the horizon. On my way down the Gulf I talked much with one of the ship's engineers, a young Englishman from Oldham, whose broad Lancashire accent had attracted me when we first met some years before. I was full of superabundant physical energy. He suggested, laughingly, that I should stoke a ship home from Bombay, in order to try my strength to the limit. The idea took possession of me. It would save me the cost of my passage by P. & O. and put some money in my pocket—for I wanted to have something to spend when I got home. I induced him to help me to carry out this plan and pledged him to secrecy. He fitted me out with a stoker's overalls and clothes. I sent all my baggage home by long sea route through a shipmate of his who was going home, and took with me only a small haversack. He found a tramp steamer of 6,000 tons or so about to leave Bombay for Marseilles via Suez, with a crew of British stokers who were one short of their complement. The Chief Engineer was a friend of his and signed me on, understanding me to be 'a young officer who was hard up and would not shirk the work', which was bound to be severe as the monsoon had just started.

I kept no written record of this trip. I have even forgotten the name of the ship, but some details are vividly present to my mind nearly thirty years later. The quarters were rough and evil-smelling: no amount of labour on our part could improve them. Disinfectants

merely added another disagreeable smell. We had to keep the portholes closed from Bombay to Aden, owing to the rough weather which added to our discomfort. The food was sufficient in quantity and of fair quality, for we had a good cook. The men were a rough lot, given to the use of words which are conventionally regarded as obscene, though nothing they said or thought was half so foul as the sort of chatter one may sometimes hear in the smoking-room of the first-class saloon. Their physique was not good: few of them were really physically capable of the strain that the work entailed. They had long spells of leave ashore on return to England, while waiting for the ship to start on a fresh voyage. They spent it for the most part in miserable doss-houses, for few had friends near London, whither we were bound, and fewer still were married. Exhaustion, increased by the unappetizing food which was their lot whether at sea or on land, brought in its train a desire for strong drink. The seemingly endless routine of shifts and rest-periods, four hours on and eight hours off, night and day, seven days a week for seven weeks or more, predisposed them to seek solace, when they set foot on shore, in the temples of Venus and Bacchus and Euphrosyne, goddess of song, who brought to them, as Milton puts it, 'jest and youthful jollity'. They were all under 40, most of them under 30, for a stoker's working life was short. I did not blame them for living for the present hour nor did their conversation, which sometimes turned reminiscently to the aforesaid temples, repel me. They worked, and did their best to live; they laughed easily, and were easily angered. But each of them bore the indelible marks of their harsh trade which was then recognized, in Mortality Tables, as one of the most dangerous to health and least insurable.

We were twelve days between Bombay and Aden; it was the height of the monsoon. I soon found out how to wield a shovel and how to spread the fine coal over the

## STOKING

length of the grate. I learned to time my stroke to follow the heavy pitch or roll of the vessel, and when and how to rake the bars. I took my turn at the ash-shoot and my watch with three other men, clad only in a pair of rope shoes to save the feet from being burned by hot ashes.

At first my mates would not believe me capable of standing the heavy work: they 'knew my sort'—we always ended by going sick and having others to do our work. One man picked a quarrel with me, as a blackleg with a white collar, which ended in blows. I retorted that I would do a double shift to decide the question. That settled it: the others separated us and I did my double shift under the watchful eye of the charge-hand whose job it was to see that steam was kept up.

At Aden a stoker went sick and had to be sent to hospital. The spirit of emulation was strong upon me: I would show them that I could beat them for once at their own dread and dreary trade. I asked the Chief Engineer to let me do double shifts to Suez, and to draw double pay for the extra shift. This would spare the other stokers and would avoid disorganizing our regular shifts. He laughed me to scorn: I should do well if I could do single shifts up the Red Sea, for there would be a following wind, than which none is more trying in the stokehold. I retorted that if I failed to do double shifts to Suez I was willing to forgo the extra pay and would take the ordinary hourly rate for all overtime worked. He offered me pay and a half for the extra shift. This I refused: I would not be a blackleg. He laughed and agreed. I went back to tell my mates, some of whom offered to lay me four to one in sovereigns I could not do it. I took the bets and gave the cook £1 to provide me with extra meat and a double help of whatever was going if I needed it, for I should have to work 16 hours a day:—8 on and 4 off twice the first day, and 4 on and 4 off the second day alternately till we reached the Canal.

## A COMPLIMENTARY DINNER

It was the hardest ten days I have ever spent: I could not have stood the strain had not my mates, who had wagered four to one against me, made things easy for me when I was off duty. They put my mat under the wind-sail and made it easier to rest upon by laying two of their own mats below it. They brought me food into the stokehold when I was on the eight-hour shift and water as cool as the wind would make it. I stoked and ate and stoked again, went up to doze or sleep and went down to the stifling damp heat of the boiler room, forgetful of nights or days but spurred on by the sight of a chalked calendar on which we marked our progress. We reached Suez exactly on time: the Chief Engineer sent for me and shook hands. The Captain came off the bridge and said I was 'a tough bugger'—a word I reproduce without apologies for, in good English (or French), it is, as in Johnson's day, a term of endearment. My brother stokers insisted on taking both my shifts through the Canal so that I might sleep undisturbed—in the Third Engineer's bunk! At Port Said our bunkers were filled afresh and most of us had a night on shore. My mates declared they would stand me dinner, 'and the rest' on shore to celebrate the occasion. I had thought of trying to leave the ship here, but after this touching tribute I put the idea aside. It was my first complimentary dinner. None other has given me quite so much gratification. Stokers, even when as clean in body as soap and the hose could make them, were not welcome in the hotels and restaurants of Port Said, but one stoker 'knew a good place'—it was a brothel with a veranda on the ground floor, brightly lit with oil lamps. We were served with the best food we had tasted since we left Bombay and with strong Italian wine from the wood by a genial bevy of friendly young women whose lot was not more unfortunate than that of those whom they served. There was music, not from a gramophone, *tuba mirum spargens*

## A BROTHEL

*sonum*, and song, though in languages which none of us could follow, from damsels in costumes which would have done no discredit to *Les Folies Bergères* of Paris, beloved of staid matrons, fathers of families, and tourists.

After each song we struck up the old chorus, known to every soldier

It's a very good song and it's very well sung  
Pleased the whole company, every one.  
And if you can beat it you're welcome to try  
But don't forget the singer is dry.

Then the singer, bringing another beaker of wine, left the little rostrum to sit with us, not less welcome because there was no spare chair for her. At about midnight the musicians passed the hat. A light supper followed, something like grilled bones or *Kabab*, with brandy in little glasses; and the company retired in couples to a rest which the girls, at least, had earned. I know not whether such places exist to-day: perhaps the radio and the gramophone have displaced those artless musicians, and the cinema (with a Board of Aged Censors) those ingenuous damsels, whose matrimonial adventures were not telegraphed from any Damascene Hollywood, or chronicled, with ample illustrations, in the daily press *pour épater les bourgeois*. They had indeed been privately photographed, and some of my stoker-hosts produced wallets from which they selected from a score of similar photographs, post-card size, 'the one you gave me last trip'. 'You shall have a better one this time,' the girl would reply and would produce a portrait that was even truer to life.

T. E. Brown has described the scene, as I remember it, in one of his poems.

Ah, naughty little girl,  
With teeth of pearl  
You exquisite little brute  
So young, so dissolute—



## FROM PORT SAID TO WORCESTER

Ripe orange, brushed  
From an o'erladen tree, chance-crushed  
And bruised and battered on the street,  
And yet so merry and so sweet!  
Ah, child, don't scoff—  
Yes, yes, I see—you lovely wretch, be off!

It must have been of such women, too, that he wrote

So, these  
That wont to hold Jove's offspring on their knees  
Take current odds  
Accept life's lees,  
And wait returning Gods.

We were 'life's lees' to them, and they to us.

We left Port Said with a few headaches, but feeling that life was worth living a little longer. My mates offered to settle their wagers at four to one. I accepted two to one plus the dinner, and we parted good friends at Marseilles, where, after a roistering night on shore, I took my discharge, bought a cheap suit and a second-hand bicycle and rode across France to Le Havre, and from Southampton to my parents' home in the Cathedral Close at Worcester.

After a few days at home, whither I had been preceded by my baggage, and in London, where I joined the East India U.S. Club with the proceeds of my earnings as a stoker, I went to Whitehall and, in the tail coat and top hat then obligatory for all official or semi-official occasions, called in turn at the India and Foreign Offices, and got into personal touch with the officials known to me till then only by their signatures. At the India Office Mr. (later Sir) Arthur Hirtzel was as kind as his predecessor Sir Richmond Ritchie had been in 1907, and in later years I was often at his house at 47 Palace Court. From that time onwards he was always ready, in private letters and personal counsel, to help me, as he helped Sir P. Cox, to give due weight to the impalpable factors,

## WHITEHALL

not always apparent to us, which influenced the Government in coming to decisions which the facts as we saw them on the spot did not seem to warrant.

Alwyn Parker of the F.O. was then in charge of Anglo-Turkish negotiations for a comprehensive settlement of all outstanding issues, including the Baghdad Railway, Koweit, and the Turco-Persian Frontier. His erudition was as great as his industry, and it was gratifying to me as a very junior Captain to find that he had not only read and critically studied all my detailed reports but had relied upon them in certain aspects of current negotiations. My meetings with these men made me realize for the first time that *les affaires sont moins importantes que les hommes*. Had I fully learned that lesson I might have been a more useful servant of Government.

I had conversations about the affairs of the A.P.O.C. with Sir Charles (later Lord) Greenway, with Lord Cowdray regarding the Luristan Survey. I met and made friends with Wratislaw and also renewed my acquaintance with Admiral Sir Edward Slade who, as Naval C.-in-C. in the East Indies Station, was deeply interested in the Arms Traffic question, in the future of the Oil Company, and in such matters as the dredging of the Shatt al Arab bar which was then under discussion with Turkey. I carried introductions to Sir Valentine Chirol of *The Times*, quite the most far-seeing journalist I have met, though Sir Stanley Reed runs him close, and saw again something of the redoubtable Sir John Jackson.

I enjoyed being at the Club, and meeting men from every part of the East. It was possible for a young officer like myself to meet there men who had served in the Indian Mutiny just fifty years earlier. I spent a week-end in Norfolk with Sir Benjamin Bromhead who commanded my Regiment, the 32nd Sikh Pioneers, in the Bhutan campaign of 1888, when he lost his right hand from a sword-cut in hand-to-hand fighting. He drove me over

## BRITAIN IN THE EAST

the estate, holding the reins with his right arm upon a hook which, it was said, had fallen heavily upon the heads of many local residents when they were small boys. With him was a daughter who had recently married Sir William (later Field-Marshal Lord) Birdwood. It was a memorable week-end, for he was as active in mind as in body, and his recollections dated from the period just after the Mutiny. His memory was kept alive in the Regiment so long as a single man remained whose father or grandfather had served under him. He was our honorary Colonel in fact as well as in name, and the last survivor of a generation of soldier-pacificators who possessed and inspired in others the most complete confidence in the unifying and civilizing mission of Britain in the East and the conviction, voiced by Lord Curzon, that

‘the message is carved in granite, it is hewn out of the rock of doom, that our work is righteous and that it shall prevail’.

That conviction sustained me and the great company of military and civil officers, N.C.O.s, and men with whom I was associated. In my letters home and in my diary I often record my surprise, and grief, that so many eminent Englishmen and otherwise worthy men of letters, particularly Liberals, did not wholeheartedly share that belief. Until I came home in 1913 I had assumed that they were an unimportant minority. I discovered to my distress that they were numerous and influential—willing to wound but afraid to strike at institutions in India which they only knew by report and of whose history they were ignorant. To my father I wrote:

‘I have long pinned my faith to Joe Chamberlain and hope that he may have a successor. At home I am a radical; who can be otherwise who has lived in Lancashire? Abroad I am a conservative because they alone seem to have troubled to understand, and having understood, to value tradition.

### THREE GODS IN WHITEHALL

"The unchanging East" is of course all nonsense; I have learned that in Persia and Arabia, but race and soil and climate do not change. Whatever new forms of Government arise in the East they will not be of the sort that Liberals deem admirable.'

After a few weeks in London Sir E. Slade, then at the Admiralty, asked me informally whether I would like to go with an Admiralty Commission to Bahrain and other places on the Arab side of the Persian Gulf to examine and report upon the prospects of finding oil there. (One of the members of the Commission was Mr. (later Lord) Cadman.) I said casually that there was nothing I should like better if it did not clash with Luristan and the Frontier Commission. By some mistake the F.O. and I.O. were not told of the proposal by the Admiralty until preparations were far advanced, and I was unofficially rebuked for trying to serve three gods in Whitehall instead of as hitherto two only (the F.O. and I.O.), though all I had done was to say 'yes, if it can be arranged'.

The Arms Traffic Conference in Paris also failed to take shape during the summer; it was held later, after my return to Persia, so I lost my chance of a month in Paris helping to seal the fate of a scandal which had cost British and Indian tax-payers several million pounds and had done immense harm to every country in the Middle East.

In August I received orders to go to Constantinople to report to Sir Louis Malet, the Ambassador, and to get into touch with the Russian Embassy. I was fully rested and was avid for fresh fields and new adventures. I managed to get the cash equivalent of a ticket by first-class Wagon Lit Express to Constantinople. I sent my kit to the Embassy at Therapia by sea; my papers by Foreign Office bag, and made a leisurely and inexpensive journey third-class to Paris, Vienna, Budapest, Bucharest, and then by Constanza to the Golden Horn, stopping

## OVERLAND TO CONSTANTINOPLE

a few days in Constantinople in an obscure hotel before collecting my luggage, putting on my best clothes, and appearing at the Embassy. The journey took me a fortnight and I was for the whole of the time in good company, for I induced a brother officer of like temperament to come with me and share expenses and experiences. We travelled by night and spent the day in the first city we reached after daybreak unless we were within a few hours of a capital city. We enjoyed the wine and the food and sampled the pleasures that each capital could afford. Bucharest fell below, and Budapest far above, our expectations. At Constantinople he took the sea route as a deck passenger via Corinth and Smyrna to Port Said, where he had consigned his baggage. We never met again, for he was killed in action in East Africa with his regiment early in 1915.

I spent a week at the Embassy where Mr. (later Sir George) Marling was Chargé d'Affaires, much of the time in the company of Lord Gerald Wellesley whom I tried unsuccessfully to get sent with the Commission as its Secretary, which he would have thoroughly enjoyed. I helped in the Chancery on the door of which was written the appropriate tag

Conturbábantur  
Constantinópolis  
innumerábilibus  
solicítudinibus

Then to Batum by sea, touching at Trebizond and a few other ports and by rail to Tiflis. Of the journey I wrote from Batum to my father:

'This ship does no credit to the noble lady *Princess Eugénie de Oldenburg* after which it is grandiloquently named. The food is as mouldy as the passengers and the table linen and cutlery as dirty. I prefer food cooked by a peasant's wife: in a properly managed country she has to cook well or accept a beating or a divorce. So she generally cooks well. But

## FROM BAKU TO TEHRAN

no-one is on board ship long enough to think it worth while to chastise the cook except the Captain and the officers who do not appear at table.'

At Baku I enjoyed the society of Ránald McDonell,<sup>1</sup> who showed me many of the sights and some of the amusements of that extraordinary place. It was not, however, so attractive to me, even in his company, as Tiflis, where I managed to spend a day and two nights sightseeing and exploring. I have no diary for this period, nor are my letters on record; I only remember the cosmopolitan gathering in the hotel and in the various restaurants I visited and that the general impression left upon me was that it was more Eastern than the East. I felt as if I was in the plaster 'Oriental Quarter' of an International Exhibition where all the dresses and dishes, designs and dialects are elaborately over-stressed. The Orient, however, is not given to strong drink, and all Tiflis seemed to reek of vodka. Had I not been alone I might have stayed longer.

Then to Resht, under the care by a pleasant coincidence of the same Captain as in 1907 and a 48-hour drive by post wagon via Qazwin to Tehran, where I was the guest in the Legation of Sir Walter and Lady Susan Townley.

'They are most hospitable but I am always on thin ice as he does not see eye to eye with Bushire and as Sir Percy's Secretary I am very properly suspect.'

<sup>1</sup> Author of a notable book, *And Nothing Long* (Constable, 1938). As this is an autobiography I make no apology for quoting from page 168 the reference to myself: 'He was just A.T. then and nothing more . . . I have never met a young man with more vitality . . . To go near him was like a tonic and one wondered whether he worked in his dreams.'

## CHAPTER IX

SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 1913

### *Back to Luristan*

AFTER long discussions and a visit to several Ministries and to the Russian Legation in Tehran I went by post cart (72 hours driving) to Hamadan, where I heard that my successor in Luristan was to be Capt. J. S. Crosthwaite of the Indian Political Department, 'an old friend of mine but a married man, which is not really quite ideal for anyone in Luristan to-day'.

'At Hamadan two members of the Survey Party awaited me: one, Soane, who would have been ideally fitted to make all arrangements for the party was sick and had to return to Mohammerah via Kermanshah and Baghdad, the other, Douglas, an engineer, came with me.

'To get to Daulatabad, half-way from Hamadan to Burujird, I had to take a devious track by night through the hills to avoid robbers who were raiding or blocking the road. Reaching Daulatabad at dawn I went to call on the Acting Governor. I luckily recognized him as a Persian official whom I had been able to befriend in 1911 when going with the 39th C.I.H. to Isfahan. At that time he was penniless and in disgrace: we had given him free transport and fed him free. He was now in favour once more and most hospitable.'

I spent one day in the garden of Prince Haji Saif-ud-Dauleh, father-in-law of the Shaikh of Mohammerah, 'well laid out, almost unrivalled, with a fine background of rocky mountains'. I noted in my diary that I here met the Swiss agent of a Swiss carpet company, itself the subsidiary of an American combine with its head office in Turkey, employing no Englishmen except one or two in a London office. He claimed British Consular protection and said he had a British flag ready to fly if

## THE SWEDISH GENDARMERIE

necessary. I asked him what taxes his firm paid to the British Treasury: and why a firm employing no Englishmen and selling in America goods made in Persia should fly a Union Jack. He said that it was the best flag to fly. I reported the case to the Legation.

Thence to Burujird, where I was a very paying guest in the house of our agent Mirza Ali Akbar. A few days later we reached Nihawand, stopping one night on the way at Wannai. Here I received a succession of notables and merchants who began by expressing their gratitude at the financial support given by H.M. Government to the Swedish gendarmerie, and ended by complaining that their sudden withdrawal had left the country-side worse off than before. Next day a gendarme who had been left behind by the Swedes sought refuge with me in fear of his life, the townspeople threatening to kill him in revenge for the folly of his Swedish captain who, having chastised the local tribes and thus incurred their resentment, left the place a few days later at their mercy. The incident upset my own plans, for the tribes attacked by the gendarmes included one section of the Bairanwand on whom I had relied for safe conduct to Burujird: the retreat of the gendarmes left me with the worst of both worlds.

My visits to the houses of notables were more like mourning ceremonies (*fatcha khaneh*) than social calls. Several men were murdered on the outskirts of the town by Lurs. Corpses could not be taken to the burial ground: one burial party was attacked and fled, leaving the body which was found a few days later with the skull smashed. It had been thrown to the dogs. This incident, which had no precedent in my own recollection, showed how bitter were the feelings aroused by the Swedish gendarmerie, and augured ill for the future.

Two villages were sacked whilst I was in Nihawand, even the beams of the houses being carried off and sold.



#### PRINCE IHTISHAM UD DAULEH

‘The smallest show of unity among villagers would stop this sort of thing but they are unable to resist the lure of stolen and therefore cheap goods.’ On the following day (Sept. 25th) I reported to the Minister:

‘There was firing by night to-day and yesterday. The gendarmerie raid has increased local insecurity and there have been further attacks by Lurs on villages. Bairanwand chiefs intend to make use of my proposed trip to Khurramabad via their country to force the Persian Government to hand back the prisoners captured.

‘It is to be hoped that when the Persian Government take in hand the restoration of order here no mercy will be shown to the Bairanwand tribesmen or their chiefs. This district has been so harried that years must elapse before it can recover. The chiefs have grown rich and own land and villages, which should assist the Persian Government in securing restitution, though nothing short of the death penalty for the principal Khans can be considered adequate punishment for the misery they have caused.’

While at Nihawand I paid my respects to Prince Ihtisham ud Dauleh.

‘Mirza Ali Akbar had previously been careful to inform him that at Hamadan Malayir and Burujird the Governors and others had always paid the first call on me, but that I had insisted on paying the first call on him in view of his rank and distinguished services. He was most friendly and cordial and was not a little flattered at my detailed references to the historic services rendered to Persia by his father Khamber Mirza in the fifties and sixties. He wrote to the Sardar Akram advising him to meet my wishes in every way: he asked me to send him a copy of Layard's *Early Adventures* in which are numerous references to his father, and I promised to send him one. I ordered a finely bound copy to be sent to him direct from London.

‘The Prince Ihtisham ud Dauleh mentioned the presence in Nihawand of a certain Count Liedekerck de Beaufort, a traveller and pseudo-savant whose connection with the French

## TO SANJABI

"Mission Scientifique en Perse" is not clear. He was anxious to visit Luristan for archaeological purposes. He had not impressed me favourably when I had met him in Ahwaz in April. The Prince told him that before he could permit him to proceed to Luristan, the permission of the Farman Farma and of the Persian Government must be formally sought and obtained.'

On October 1st we left Nihawand, accompanied for some miles by three of the Prince's sons: as we left the town news was brought of more robberies by Lurs and of three men killed on a pass only three miles distant. They urged me to return, but I refused, feeling that my escort was strong enough to overawe or, if need be, to defeat casual bandits. On October 2nd we crossed the Khatun Rah pass across the high range which forms the boundary between Luristan and the misnamed province of Iraq-i-Ajami. Here my escort, 40 strong, turned back and we went on alone down the steep slope, feasting our eyes on the magnificent view of the fertile plains of Khawah and Chawari which in happier times supported, and could again support, a population a hundred times as numerous as the nomads who now graze their flocks there.

'At the first camp we reached, a large *istiqlal* or complimentary gathering awaited us. It consisted of some seventy men well mounted and strongly armed with modern rifles, headed by a drum-major with kettle drums, a standard-bearer and a mace-bearer in charge of a finely caparisoned *gadah* or led horse, and the 15-year-old son of our host to be riding a beautiful little stallion. Preceded by this cortège we—that is to say the Burujird Agent, Douglas the engineer, and I—went at a smart canter some five or six miles across the plain in a high wind to Sanjabi the camp of Nazar Ali Khan, Fath-i-Sultan, Sardar Akram, the ruler of this part of Luristan.

'A few minutes later I was conducted to the great tent in which he sat and was by him introduced to his five other sons aged from 4 to 13, all dressed just like their father and comporting themselves with as much dignity. He was a man of

## A SHOOTING-MATCH

middle age, and though a heavy opium smoker was a clear thinker, a good talker and a man who knew how to command obedience. We took coffee, tea and light refreshments in proper order, and discussed in conventional terms the prevailing disorder, the price of wood and wheat, gall nuts and gum tragacanth, the relative virtues of the Mauser and Lee Enfield rifles and of his Mauser and my Webley-Fosbury pistol. I undertook to put my weapon to the test in competition with his eldest son. The boy's eyes gleamed and he leapt to his feet. "Where are you going, my son?" said his father. "To tie up a few goats on the hillside to serve as a mark," he replied. "Thus only can the issue between us be settled. I have lived for this day." He ran off and the news spread through the camp.

'I went a few minutes later to my tent close by that of the Sardar Akram. Mirza Ali Akbar beamed on me. "This is a great stroke of luck. If you win it will redound to your credit: if you lose it will delight the Sardar Akram's favourite son and rejoice his father's heart."

'I took my best rifle and my Webley-Fosbury revolver, won at Sandhurst, and cleaned them methodically in presence of a curious crowd; then, escorted by two of the small brothers of my rival, walked a few hundred yards from the camp to where several hundred men stood or sat in groups to watch the contest. Four black goats were tethered on a hillside 400 yards off: at a distance from each other of about 10 yards. I was to fire at the left-hand and he at the right-hand victim: the two in the centre were to be in reserve, in case of a tie. We were to fire not more than five shots each, lying prone. Whoever hit the mark with fewest shots was to be adjudged the winner. "Ya Ali, Ya Husain" cried the onlookers as the hope of their side loaded and took careful aim. Our two rifles went off in rapid succession; each goat jumped and struggled to free itself: we had missed, but not by much, and no-one could tell us where the shot had gone, for it raised no dust. Again we fired: one goat fell, but got up on its legs again, seemingly unhurt, and both again ran round the pegs to which they were tethered. At the third shot both fell. Half a dozen mounted men raced off and cut the throats of

## THE ADVANTAGES OF RAILWAYS

the beasts so that they might be "lawful" for the table, and brought them to us. Mine had a broken leg, his was shot through the heart.

'All eyes were turned upon the happy father, who sat upon his horse just behind us enjoying his son's success. "Try again," said his father: we lay down once more and, at the first shot, my rival's quarry fell. Mine fell only at the fourth. Shame there was none on either side. The Sardar Akram told his henchmen to keep the dead goats for themselves and, an hour later, in the best of tempers, paid me a formal return visit in such privacy as was possible at the door of my little tent. At first he could talk only of the shooting: what targets should be chosen for the revolver match at what range? I left it to his son to make proposals.

'After a time the talk turned to other matters. After a cordial reference to Capt. Lorimer who, he said, had first shown him the way of prosperity, he confirmed his readiness to help the survey party. He well understood the advantages of roads and railways, and also their disadvantages, namely, the power it gave to townsmen and hordes of government officials to harry him and his tribes. Newspapers said that railways and roads brought security, but the security was that of landowners and merchants, not of the common people, who were enslaved by these bands of iron. What security could I provide for them?

'I replied that our experience of railways all over the world in the past fifty years or so was that they brought security not by making independent tribes less independent, but by increasing trade, opening new markets, and adding appreciably to the personal prosperity of every individual in their vicinity. I claimed, somewhat disingenuously, that thieves and robbers in Luristan were seldom so by choice, want and poverty having driven them to it, and when railways opened up markets to all and sundry to dispose of local produce, the resulting prosperity would itself bring security.

'I added that he was by now the biggest landowner in Luristan, and as such stood to gain enormously by the development of communications, which alone would make it possible for him to extract profit from the vast fertile areas

## A ROYAL DINNER

now given up to pasture or totally deserted. For good or evil, he and his people were the inhabitants of the land, and could not be ejected by any Government: any change of habit or custom would come slowly and benefit all alike.

‘Some further discussion on the subject followed, and on my pointing out that he was looking rather far ahead, there being at the moment no question of actual railway construction, he asked me to give him an undertaking that construction would not begin in his territories without his consent. I assented to this so far as the British Government and the Persian Railway Syndicate were concerned. I could not, I said, speak for the Persian Government.’

This preliminary discussion lasted about three hours and was brought to an end by a royal dinner, served in the great *diwan* tent, finely carpeted, in great copper dishes, with a multitude of side dishes of nickel, piled with as great a variety of delicacies as are to be found anywhere in Persia, for, the Burujird Agent told me, preparations had been made a week ahead for this feast, which fell on an auspicious day. We ate and drank our fill and almost immediately after retired to our respective tents after a *mullah* had delivered us a brief reading from the *Qur’ān* and a homily upon the glories of the Jafari tenets.

‘Next morning soon after dawn the marksman son was at my tent with all his brothers. We must try our revolvers. The target was to be a barn-door fowl tethered to a peg at 50 paces. He had brought four from the village—nomads do not keep poultry. I suggested eggs on top of a stake at 25 yards. His face fell: the wind would blow them off and they would not be such fun. I gave him his way and we set off followed by a growing crowd. But he had not reckoned with his father, who always smoked his opium pipe in the morning and could not be disturbed or do any public business until after he had broken his fast, an hour before midday. He sent word that the trial must wait till two hours after midday: the boy accepted the order with good grace and suggested

## RAILWAYS FURTHER DISCUSSED

that we should ride together and "eat the air". I readily agreed and rode off a few minutes later upon his father's best stallion—mares are not much ridden in that part of the country—accompanied by several retainers. The two eldest boys, aged 16 and 13, were in high spirits and clearly on the best of terms with each other. They talked incessantly in the Luri dialect, and plied me with questions ranging from the training of hawks and hunting dogs, the breeding of mules and horses, sheep and goats, to the best makes of shot-guns and the marriage customs of Europe, as to which the elder boy had picked up some ideas which would have done credit to Baron Munchausen had he written a European version of the *Thousand and One Nights*.

'We returned to find his father impatiently expecting us: we were late for lunch and had kept him waiting. I hastily took the blame, and was graciously forgiven. After lunch we resumed our official talks.

'He was still apprehensive of the effect of the railway on his own position and that of his tribes. He made constant references to Shaikh Khazal of Mohammerah who was to him, as to so many other chiefs and notables, the exemplar of a man who has assisted the British and in turn been assisted by them. Finally, I told him the gist of the Shaikh's undertaking with regard to land required for railway purposes; this seemed to relieve his mind, and he said he would follow the example thus set. He still pressed for assurances against possible oppression by the Persian Government, but I declined to discuss this on the ground that references to this question were premature.

'At last he undertook to sign the detailed agreement regarding guards, &c., for the survey party and for ourselves, for such portion of the route to be surveyed as lay within his territory (i.e. nearly half of the total distance between Dizful and Khurramabad).

'After further discussion it was agreed that as additional consideration he should receive from me the following presents:

- 1 sporting rifle and cartridges,
- 1 pair Ross binoculars,
- 1 three pole two-fly tent -to be ordered for him from India.

## A SECOND SHOOTING-MATCH

'He sealed the agreements next morning and sent letters to various people counselling them to fall in with my wishes. He also sent me a presentation horse, a nice young colt which the Burujird Agent later took as his perquisite. I sent him a message saying that Capt. Lorimer in 1904 and I myself in 1911 had refused to accept anything from him, as our friendship had not reached such a point as to make it suitable to do so; having regard however to changed circumstances, I was willing to accept it on this occasion.

'Before we had quite finished I saw the sons hanging about outside the tent. Their father's back was toward them and they beckoned to me to bring the talk to an end and to turn to the serious business of the day. Before long the chance came and the Sardar Akram walked with me to the range. The fowls were poor specimens but good enough for our purposes. On this occasion we were to be allowed six shots each, and if possible to kill both our respective birds. Again I was just defeated: again the fowls, sadly mauled by our heavy bullets, were handed over to a favourite henchman. Again the proud father beamed upon his son before a delighted audience.'

Next day I left for Khurramabad, with a small substantial escort, in charge of my successful rival of yesterday. After my mules had left, but before my departure, I said farewell to the Sardar Akram and took the opportunity to recapitulate the main points of the agreement he had sealed a few hours earlier. It was well I did so, for he at once

'raised all sorts of difficulties regarding our projected journey through the Kashgan gorge, alleging it to be impassable, unsafe, desolate, &c.: finally, however, he assented and so informed his son. My final argument, which appeared to carry conviction, was that the Almighty had found a way through the gorge for his waters, and we were convinced that by trusting to God and following the same route we should find a way for a railway, e.g. "railway alignments follow the main lines of drainage". We took our leave at about 10.30.

## THE BAIRANWAND KHANS

the Sardar at once striking camp and proceeding towards the Kakawand country. A short march of three hours brought us to Laghri, where we struck Major E. B. Burton's route of 1897 which enabled us to locate our position fairly accurately.

'A special messenger here brought news that a party of 150 horsemen of the Falak ud Din, who had killed two men on the Warazan pass a day or two before, had raided Nihawand the day we left. When a large town like Nihawand boasting of 1,000 riflemen and several hundred sowars is unable to send out more than a handful of men to recover stolen property, and when the said handful is content to return empty-handed, it is not a matter of surprise that Lurs grow more daring.

'News was also received that the Bairanwand Khans had undoubtedly intended to induce us to go through their country by false promises, friendly letters, &c., and then hold us as ransom for their brother tribesmen recently captured by the Swedes.

'Feeling runs so high that I fear it will be some years before we can prudently enter into practical relations with the Bairanwand on a basis of mutual confidence, as in the past with other tribes. At Laghri we also heard that the special messenger sent to Khurramabad by the Sardar Akram with letters to leading men enjoining them to render me every assistance, had been stripped by some Lurs in the Tang-i-Gau Shumar and the letter mischievously torn in pieces, just to show contempt for him. We left Laghri (7,100 ft.) at day-break on a cold morning. Some of my sowars went to a hamlet to get bread but were refused. Shots were exchanged and in the scuffle that followed the mare of the head sowar strayed or was stolen. Half the party stayed behind to look for it, so I had a small escort only during the allegedly perilous passage of the Gau Shumar gorge, a long defile through the Kuh-i-Safid through which the Kashgan (formed by the confluence of the Ab-i-Alishtar (Khaman) and the Laghri streams) reaches the Chigini plateau (a continuation to the west of the Khurramabad plain). It was an important defile, all roads for many miles east and west being very steep and almost impracticable for laden animals. In it, as is usual in most important gorges in SW. Persia, were relics of a Sassanian



## A TRIBE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF

road. We halted at 8 p.m. in the Tang to settle a violent dispute amongst my sowars whose headmen had appropriated a proportion of their daily salary, which had been paid ten days in advance. I displayed my moral and physical *sang froid* while they quarrelled by indulging in a chilly bathe in the Kashgan.

'Next day we left camp at dawn, climbed Rikh Kuh (8,000 ft.), and were rewarded by a fine view in every direction. To the north the ranges overshadowing Nihawand were visible: to the south Kialan Kuh and the great limestone backbone of Pusht-i-Kuh was just distinguishable. To the south and west, over 3,000 ft. below, we could see the Kashgan winding its unexplored course southwards through low hills. Thence to Tishkin, where we found the Diwanbegi and Beglerbegi (joint Deputy Governors *ex officio* of Khurramabad) awaiting our arrival with some thirty sowars. I had originally asked them to Burujird to meet me, but the vagaries of the gendarmes under Major Skjaldebrand made this impossible, so I asked them to meet me here. They have more influence than anyone else in these parts—though that is not saying much. We ate poorly. The horses and mules got only maize without straw and we maize bread.

'I met various elders, greybeards, Khans, Kadkhudas, &c., in the evening before dark; one Kadkhuda representing an important section, took occasion to intimate politely that my twenty Chigini sowars (supplied by the Sardar Akram) were all from one half of the tribe and that unless the other half, which he represented, was admitted to participation, there would be trouble. The section he represented was allied to the one which partially looted my caravan in the same district some twenty-seven months earlier, whilst it was being escorted by sowars belonging to the other half, so I had to take him seriously and arranged for ten of the malcontents to accompany us next morning.

'On Oct. 8th and 9th we visited three old bridges, one of which, the Pul-i-Kashgan, is described by De Morgan in his *Mission Scientifique* (pp. 204-5). The Pul-i-Kurr-o-Dukhtar is the second and I saw it the next day. The third, Pul-i-Kalhur, is clearly of very high antiquity, for the river has, since it

## TROUBLE WITH OUR ESCORTS

was built, cut a new deep channel through solid rock.<sup>1</sup> It is unlike any other old bridge I have seen in Persia, with "Gothic" rather than "Norman" arches: the stones are more roughly cut, but larger. It may even be Sassanian: it is a curious fact that just as the word "bridge" is not found in the Old or New Testament, so also there is no reference in Arestic or earlier writings, though small arched buildings were not unknown. De Morgan mentions it (pp. 204-5), but cannot have seen it or he would not have missed the Cufic inscription which I could not read but which looks as if it refers to repairs, for the part of the bridge on which it is carved is clearly less ancient than the rest. The scenery round the bridge is magnificent, fine trees, abundant grass, and cliffs rising 1,000 ft. on either side.

'Then to Dilbarr and up the Kuh-i-Baghileh (Bogheln of De Bode's "Travels") and to the romantic little *Imamzadeh* of Hayat Ghait where De Bode rested over eighty years ago. I have little doubt that these *Imamzadehs* are often pre-Islamic in origin, for they are so often found along routes which were in use in Sassanian times and may well have fallen into disuse soon after the Moslem-Arab invasions of Persia.

'On both days Mirza Ali Akbar and I had constant trouble with our escorts, who were quarrelling with each other and being outside their own tribal areas were uneasy at nights, troubled doubtless by their own consciences, and fearing reprisals for past raids. As usual I took no chances: as always I lay on a carpet on the ground. During this trip I slept with my revolver attached by a lanyard to my wrist: my saddle as a pillow, my rifle and bandolier beneath it: my horse tethered at my feet and a rope from its headstall round my left wrist so that in case of an alarm I could rise instantly and stand to its head. A thief crawled up one night to where I lay: I could just see him against the skyline. He came as noiselessly as a cat, but the slight vibration of the earth aroused me. When he was within a few feet I sat up suddenly and gave a grunt, fearing that he would knife me. He shuffled away

<sup>1</sup> Photographs of some of these bridges are shown in an official Report, a copy of which is in the Library of the Royal Geographical Society.

## THE BOY AND GIRL BRIDGE

silently: not a guard was awake, though I had over twenty men close to me.

'The Pul-i-Kurr-o-Dukhtar (Boy and Girl Bridge) is not unlike the Kashgan bridge in style: its name derives from a legend such as attaches to so many castles and bridges all over the world. A youth loved a girl whose parents would not give her in marriage—often he swam the river to pay her court, but could find no means of carrying her off, for she would not face the cold stream and the water was too swift for any *killik* or raft of inflated skins. So he captured three rich merchants and held them prisoner, under threat of terrible tortures, until for the love of God and their fellow men they would build a bridge. When it was complete save a single arch which was roughly spanned by tree trunks, he rode with an escort of youths to his future father-in-law's stronghold, seized his bride and rode off, throwing down the light timber behind him. Then he released the merchants, with a warning not to finish the bridge until the girl had borne him a son, which happened within the year. Thereupon the families made peace and lived happily ever after. The son became the ruler of all the tribes on both sides of the Kashgan: and imposed such peace that an old woman could safely drive a donkey laden with honey, or a shepherd boy a flock of lambs for a week's journey in any direction without fear.

'I met by a happy coincidence, a man with "a donkey load of honey" a few days later on his way to Khurramabad. The honeycombs, broken from the straw bee-keps or skeps of the type seen in England in my boyhood, were cylindrical in form, some 6 inches in diameter and 3 or 4 inches high, made completely airtight by layer after layer of mud made with finely powdered straw and a little plaster of Paris, so hard and firm that it turned the edge of a knife. It was as effective as any tin and more resistant to rough usage than most. I bought several of them and carried them with me loose in a saddle-bag for weeks.

'The last stage of the journey to Khurramabad was the most difficult. The leading citizens of the town who were with me were nervous, and looked to me for encouragement,

## THE FATHULLAHI

Would I fight if attacked? Yes, I said. "But," they replied, "what if we are attacked by the Chigini who maltreated you in 1911? [see page 164]. This time they may want blood—your blood." "It is their blood that will be spilled," I replied boastingly: "my friend the engineer can kill at 600 yards" (he had, in fact, never held a rifle) "and I—you have heard of my prowess in the Sardar's camp last week. Away with vain fears. We are thirty strong."

'After much talk we arranged for the son of the headman of the subsection through whose lands we had to pass to be with us and that we should be accompanied to the town by the headman of another sub-section. To prevent further mischief, every sub-section had been told they would share in the tribal subsidy to be granted in connection with the movements of the survey party, and were promised something on account in advance.

'Nevertheless, when our cavalcade had gone a few miles into the lands of the Fathullahi, four or five armed men came up from the fields and began to fire over our heads a yard or so in front of us, threatening bloodshed if we advanced. The elders with me displayed admirable discretion as also the sowars in their train. No attempt was made to use more than moral suasion to prevent the malcontents from proceeding to violence. But for the presence of the elders and their baggage, our gallant sowars would have sought safety in flight, leaving us to negotiate personally with the riflemen. Some elders besought me to go on, others were equally importunate in their advice to me to go back.

'Finally the son of the headman of the Fathulla section induced the malcontents, by sweet words and promises, to permit us to pass. The Fathullahi were responsible for robbing me within a few miles of this spot in 1911 and doubtless wished to repeat the process (not having suffered in any way for it): they had not heard of, or had disregarded, the presence of their chiefs with me.

'An hour later we reached the tents of Kadkhuda Kazim, and after a long delay took a poor meal of barley bread and curds while we negotiated for more guards and hostages. We started again and, 5 miles from the town, were met by

### ‘MINORITIES HAVE RIGHTS’

some fifty men headed by Saifullah Khan, brother of the Diwanbegi, a cheery rascal hand-in-glove with the Bairanwand and other arch-brigands as also was Sardar Khan, who was likewise in our train. I hope to take one of these two to Dizful (to return with the survey party).

‘About 4 miles from the town a deputation of Chigini “Khans” (ousted by their followers a generation or so ago and now separated from the tribe) met us opened-mouthed and servilely obeisant, expecting payment apart altogether from any so-called “services” rendered: they were told to come with us to the town and to “remain hopeful”.

‘Dissatisfied, they seized the horse and rifle of one of the Diwanbegi’s retainers, and a further noisy quarrel arose which Saifullah Khan succeeded in quelling not by force but by promises of rewards in the town.

‘No one showed the smallest resentment at the spectacle of an important and strongly armed cavalcade being held up by a few ragged malcontents with guns. Minorities have rights here such as not even a Parliamentary Government in England accords to the most pious conscientious objector.

‘We reached the town soon after sunset, the sowars of my escort showing considerably more energy in chasing small boys out of the way than they had hitherto displayed.

‘For the next few days I halted at Khurramabad, staying in the house of Mirza Mahmud Mustaufi, fearing that were either the Diwanbegi or Beglerbegi to be our hosts, it would lead to ill-feeling and jealousy on the part of the other. They both came to see me at midday and discussed the reward to be paid on the spot to the Chigini Khans and Kadkhudas, and the terms to be offered them hereafter. Each “*Tireh*” or branch of the tribe was to receive a specified sum in cash, the distribution of which next day led to rioting and almost to bloodshed. Some refused to take it, alleging that they expected a rifle and £20 or £30 each; others blustered whilst their supporters, anxious rather for cash in hand than for future benefits, tried to wrest the bag from their chief and get their share before it was too late. Finally they departed, a little depressed, but still hopeful (the important thing) of more bounteous favours to come.

## BLACKMAIL

'In the afternoon Husain Khan, brother of Ali Mardan Khan, Salar Muzaffar, Bairanwand, came to see me to take his leave and get his expected *khi'l'at* (robe of honour). One of his retainers was armed with a captured gendarmerie rifle; he brought friendly messages from the Bairanwand who, having failed to hold me as a hostage, wished to make friends. I fell in with this plan, expressed my disappointment at having been deprived of the pleasure of seeing them, and begged him to invite them to come here to see me. He having, as was to be expected, replied that this was not practicable, I sent them friendly written and verbal messages and entrusted him with a Mauser pistol and 120 rounds for his brother: Shaikh Ali Khan and Ghulam Ali Khan Shuja es Sultaneh, the other two potentates of the tribe, had to be dealt with separately, Husain Khan being on bad terms with them; I also wrote them suitable letters and sent them a revolver each. This will, I hope, assist in allaying the feeling aroused by the Swedish gendarmerie. It hurts me to have any dealings with these brigands and murderers who have wrought so much misery within the last few months, but so long as the survey party is in the province, we must keep on good terms with all parties. If and when railway construction begins, other measures must be devised by the Persian Government; for the present we must rely on the power of the purse, a stimulant which is only effective in larger and yet larger doses.

'In the evening I was visited by a large deputation of the Bala Gariweh tribes. They were all friendly, but pressed me to await the tribal migration, in a fortnight's time, which would, of course, be very inconvenient, as I have no time to spare. They all wanted to talk with me alone, and were inclined to ignore Mirza Ali Akbar, whom they had not met, and to deal with me personally. This, however, was plainly inadvisable, as I shall shortly be leaving the province, and I insisted that Mirza Ali Akbar was my *wazir* and fully empowered. Next day (October 12th) they adopted a new and unexpected line, i.e. that they wanted the railway to pass through the middle of their territories, so that they might benefit therefrom, and not via the Kashgar valley, which was

## A DEPUTATION

a sort of no-man's-land. All their talk was of *caravansarais* and straw and barley, and it seemed useless if not dangerous to try to convince them that the railway required none of these things, nor in view of past experience was I inclined to lay emphasis on the benefits of rapid communication; the reply, I well knew, would be "our wives and followers will run away by the railway—we will have none of it". As for the increased sale of their produce of wood, grass, &c., their answer would be "we already have insufficient; we require all we have for ourselves—no one shall take it away or buy it".

'There seemed a real danger of their taking fright at the idea of a railway, so I impressed on them, through Mirza Ali Akbar, that only a survey was now in progress and that when it was a question of beginning construction it would be time enough for them to consider their attitude to it.

'There was a fight amongst the Chigini chiefs in the evening over the division of the money they had received, and several were wounded. Husain Khan Bairanwand left in the evening with a draft agreement for the Bairanwand to sign, on the lines of the Chigini agreement so as to "keep them hopeful". At dusk we went to inspect houses, the object being

- (1) to lease a house for the use when in Khurramabad of the Luristan Officer—on a three years' lease;
- (2) to obtain a house for the use when in Khurramabad of the survey party—for, say, a month.

The task was complicated by the fact that all available suitable houses were out of repair, whilst it was inexpedient to take any houses belonging to either of the principal factions in the town, for fear of annoying the others.

'Abbas Khan Judeki and Mir Haji (Baharwand Mirs) came to see me secretly after dark; the upshot of a long conversation was that they, as important chiefs, wanted special allowances and guarantees. I did not commit myself to anything, but asked them how such a proposal was reconcilable with the fact that

- (1) if it was known to others that they were in receipt of special treatment, trouble would be caused;
- (2) there was a strong faction hostile to them whom they were powerless to influence for good.

## THE SWEDISH GENDARMERIE

'They showed strong inclination to oppose any idea of having a road, iron or otherwise, anywhere except along the old caravan route.

'Two Bairanwand thieves were caught last night making a hole in the wall of an adjacent dwelling with a view to entering the courtyard of our house. News was also received that the gendarmes had executed 14 of the persons captured in Burujird, including one or two undoubtedly innocent persons, Khurramabadis; a paper signed by the local authorities in Burujird and countersigned by me relating to one of them unfortunately arrived too late. Another man, a Burujird tradesman Kambarbegi, was about to be executed when a similar paper also countersigned by me reached Sultanabad; he was at once released. These blue-eyed Swedes are much mistaken if they think to improve matters in Luristan by raiding a town and hanging a few odd Lurs who are no more guilty than their fellows of any particular offence, and in some cases are plainly innocent.

'My own position in Luristan and that of the British generally has suffered greatly, as it is everywhere known that the gendarmes are our own creation and are supported by us and Russia. I strongly suspect that the Persian Government in Tehran are not ill content at this by-product of Anglo-Russian diplomacy and I, in my turn, am more than ever doubtful of the efficacy of a policy of intervention, in which I once believed. Persia must work out her own salvation in her own way; dreadful mistakes will be made and sore injustices will be suffered, but they will be less intolerable than at our hands.

'The news had an unfortunate effect on the morning meeting of the Bala Gariweh chiefs and we made no progress.

'One evening I went to Beglerbegi's house to meet a selected deputation of the Bala Gariweh chiefs. They were prepared, in so far as our affairs were concerned, to sink their tribal feuds and to give hostages in Dizful for their good behaviour. If Shaikh Khazal supported railway construction, they would do likewise; if not they would oppose it: whatever terms "Khazal" (as they always call him) agreed to they would also agree to (a rhetorical flourish not to be taken



literally). They wanted a letter from him which they could show to their dependants.

'Wherever I go in S. Persia I find Shaikh Khazal is quoted as a standing example of a tribal chief who has assisted British enterprise and has reaped his reward. Some are jealous of and many envy his position, but all recognize that his position to-day, compared with his position twenty years ago when he succeeded to the Shaikhship, is sufficient justification for a policy of active encouragement to British enterprise; Persians have not failed to note that he has no counterpart in the Russian sphere and that he has been a loyal servant of the Central Government, paying his taxes regularly and in full, and taking the daughters of Prince-Governors to wife every few years.

'On October 15th I heard from Ghulam Ali Khan, Bairanwand, he wanted to meet me and promised to sign the draft agreement. He would be staying near Burujird this winter and was building a fort. Sardar Khan (a relation of his and one of the Diwanbegi), a notorious local ruffian whom I proposed to take to Dizful with me, to be a Railway Syndicate head guard, in order to keep him out of mischief, and to placate his fellows, had been imprisoned in Burujird by Haji Fakhr ud Din, Iftikhar ul Islam. Would I procure his release?

'From another source I received details of the pitiful state of Burujird. Lurs had gained access by night to parts of the town and ransacked several houses; three or four more people had been killed on the outskirts; 150 loads pillaged from a Kermanshah caravan on the Daulatabad-Sultanabad road, and smaller robberies elsewhere.

'Meanwhile the gendarmes are occupied (no doubt to the gratification of the Lurs) in depriving the villagers of their arms, their sole defence against brigands from whom the gendarmes are quite unable to protect them.

'In a fortnight's time, when the Bairanwand have migrated southwards, the Swedes will no doubt despatch a force of gendarmes or others to Burujird, and announce that order has been restored (the disturbers of the peace having left as usual for their winter quarters).

## MYSTERIOUS INFLUENCES

'My negotiations with the Bala Gariweh during the day centred on the question of hostages. I wanted them at Ahwaz or at Khurramabad. They suggested Dizful; the usual deadlock followed, and it was a week before the seemingly innumerable negotiations ended in something that looked like a settlement. It was duly inscribed on the fly-leaf of half a dozen Qur'āns. On October 22nd I noted in my diary that it was rumoured that "the Regent has returned and has combined with the Bakhtiaris to fight the gendarmes and the Russians; the gendarmes were defeated and reinforcements have been sent to Tehran by the gendarmes in Inaq-i-Ajami".

'Incredible as it may seem, such stories are readily believed here. Bakhtiaris, Russians and gendarmes are all looked upon by the Lurs as so many tribes like themselves, and the words *majlis* (Parliament) or *mashrutah* (constitution) signify amongst the average tribesmen some mysterious influence, inimical alike to *daulat* (government), "Islam", and *qanun* (law). It is a commonplace of conversation amongst them that "the Constitution has become weak at . . . and the Government is on its feet again", and I am often asked if it is true that "the *majlis* are all Babis and backsliders from Islam". When people's minds are in this chaotic condition, it is not easy to predict what effect any particular arguments or action will produce. At a recent gathering of elders at which I was present, one greybeard was heard to remark, with all solemnity, that "it would be an offence against religion to assist Englishmen, because they wore helmets with a brim, which prevented them from touching the ground with their forehead when at prayer".

'At last, on October 27th, I left Khurramabad for Dizful. A few miles out of the town we were met by Baruni and Hatim of the Muradaliwand; the latter was wounded in the spring in a tribal fight with the Qalawand, losing his nose and one eye. He was one of the best fighting men of his tribe, and his mutilated condition tends to keep alive the bitterness of the blood-feud between the tribes even more than his death would have done. Our departure from Khurramabad was somewhat delayed by further demands for money from

## TRAVELLING WITH DOUGLAS

Baruni and Husain Khan. They were satisfied with 100 krans each, to be deducted from future emoluments.

'We camped at Shah-in-Shah 9 miles south of Khurramabad, near Kadkhuda Muradi of the Muradaliwand. A few nights later thieves visited the camp; one was surprised by Douglas at the door of our tent, and during the hue and cry that followed another one managed to steal a mule belonging to Mirza Ali Akbar.'

But for this incident and for interminable wranglings, over money and the respective responsibilities of the various tribes in their particular areas, the journey to Dizful, which we reached on November 9th, was uneventful. It was the first occasion on which I had travelled with a fellow European and the experience was sometimes irksome to us both. He knew no Persian and was unacquainted with Persian ways and not ready to adopt them. He could not sit comfortably on the ground. He wanted regular meals and did not relish Persian food. He was a most competent engineer but was exhausted by long hours in the saddle to which I was inured, and did not enjoy scaling the mountains in heavy boots which I had long ago discarded for Persian cloth shoes. He would not grow a beard, as I did, in a country where all grown men were bearded. It is greatly to his credit that we never quarrelled and that he bore me no grudge when we parted.

At Dizful I found the survey party awaiting our arrival and I handed over to my friend and successor, Capt. J. S. Crosthwaite, the original agreements that I had made, with the fullest available details, hoping optimistically and in all good faith that I had done something to smooth his path. Events soon showed that I had done nothing of the sort but had, in fact, committed what I may fairly call my first big mistake. I should not have attempted to conclude agreements at the other end of the line. I should have sent the Burujird Agent perhaps via Baghdad

### DIVIDED RESPONSIBILITY

to meet him at Dizful, and I should have left him to deal with the tribes in his own way. I had unwittingly contributed to the eventual failure of his negotiations for the upward journey of the survey party by being myself the disburser of sums and the negotiator of agreements which it would not fall to me to see executed. The survey party never managed to get to Khurramabad, to Crosthwaite's sore disappointment. He felt that had either of us been entrusted with responsibility from the outset we might have succeeded. The divided responsibility contributed to the débâcle; it was a real disappointment to me, but to him a bitter experience, the more so because he had no previous experience of the fickle, avaricious crowd with whom he had to deal. Our friendship, which I greatly valued, survived, but it was clouded by the memory of his deserved reproaches.

I summarized the situation as I left it in a letter to my father:

'There is nothing in Luristan upon which one can build. There is no confidence in the present, no pride in the past, no hope in the future, no patriotism except within the narrow limits of the tribe, no *religio* or bond of religion, for Islam is weaker here than anywhere else in Persia and nowhere strong. Oaths are valueless and where anarchy is rife even self-interest is not an easy chord to strike. I am sorry for my successor and ashamed to hand over such a dirty job to a man who has not tackled this sort of thing before.'

I may here record, in justice to myself, that a few months later, when I learned that things were going badly at Dizful, I offered to leave the Frontier Commission temporarily or even to change places with Crosthwaite and try to see the survey party through. My offer was not accepted, but it was made in good faith.

A vast accumulation of papers awaited me at Mohammerah. My own accounts had to be dealt with—a point on which I had always prided myself, for I had early

## OFFICE-WORK

realized that when entrusted with the expenditure of considerable sums of money it was essential to present accounts not only in intelligible form but supported so far as possible with proper vouchers. The Comptroller of Accounts in India, to whom my accounts had gone for some six years, had treated me well: I felt bound to devote many hours to meeting the needs of his office. This was not easy, for I had of course no clerk, no typewriter, no table even. I had to do all my work seated cross-legged at the door of my tent; my office furniture consisted of two despatch boxes; I had tabloid ink for fountain pens, a few pencils, and some foolscap notebooks of thin paper which could be used to take one carbon copy. Always in my pocket was a small note-book the contents of which I transferred duly to the larger books which I kept posted almost daily. One was my official diary; the second contained *matériaux pour servir*—a vast collection of notes on miscellaneous subjects which might one day serve a useful purpose. The third was used for letters home of which I kept no copies and for copies of letters of which a record was necessary. My official letters and diaries and some official correspondence went to Bushire for transmission as necessary to Tehran and the Foreign and India Offices, and to Simla or Delhi, where they generally attained the dignity of print, and burial, in the *Proceedings of the Government of India in the Foreign Department*. Sometimes they appeared in Foreign Office Blue Print as enclosures to a despatch from H.M.'s Minister in Tehran. This, I ingenuously felt, was fame, for 'blue print' went (unless very secret) to many diplomatic chanceries in order to keep them informed as to current events in other spheres.

Several tons of tents and equipment from India for the British and Russian delegations to the Frontier Commission awaited my arrival. A sergeant of the Indian Ordnance Department was deputed to hand over to me.

## A HARD YEAR

He had them all pitched in fine order on the desert behind the date groves at Mohammerah, and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company's agents provided electric light in the larger tents and round it upon improvised standards, an innovation which lent distinction and prestige to the Commission's proceedings.

In a letter to my father towards the end of the year I wrote:

'This has been a hard year save for my few months at home, and a harder one is ahead of me. I have, however, managed to save half my pay and all my health and strength. I have made some new friends in London among those who shape the raw material which I provide in such ample quantity. I am tired, at the moment, of writing endless reports, correcting proofs and dealing with the minutiae of maps and route reports, but a week of long nights in bed is enough to enable me, like a bow, to recover my strength. I find myself, in fact, ill at ease in a house and not too comfortable in a soft bed. I have slept so long on the ground that a downy mattress feels stuffy and a bedroom a prison. I have taken lately to the floor as an aid to sleep. Next week I shall move into camp and shall be more at ease.

'It does me good to see the progress made by the Oil Company and it makes me proud of my compatriots in the engineering world. Like the smith and potter in Ecclesiasticus xxxviii, 34, "all their desire is in the work of their craft".

'The influence of the Shaikh of Mohammerah, whom we trust and who trusts us to shield him from his many enemies, and of the Bakhtiari Khans, has kept this part of Persia free from the intolerable disorders that I have met, as you know, in every other part of the country. In places where no European save an occasional Consul was ever seen, employees of the Oil Company can not only travel freely but look forward to a welcome. Tribesmen who used to stone or shoot at me, a few miles from the oilfields, are becoming skilled mechanics. We are witnessing here a new "Industrial Revolution" which is quietly transforming this part of Persia. Of course it has its disadvantages. It would not be easy to protect the Fields or

### ‘SOMETHING DONE’

Refinery if disorders were to spread to this corner of Persia, and the British Government are committed, by this immense capital investment, to a more active part in what is diplomatically the neutral zone of Persia than was dreamed of in 1906-7, when the Anglo-Russian Convention was drafted and concluded. Long views in foreign policy usually turn out to be not much more far-seeing than short ones. Cox and I, *si parva licet componere magnis*, have at least kept those in authority fully primed with facts, and when asked, with interpretations of facts.

‘The Railway Survey Party will, I hope, succeed: the Frontier Commission has behind it the authority of four governments and I cannot imagine that anything can prevent a successful conclusion of its work. That will be, in the words of the poet,

Something attempted, something done  
to earn a night’s repose.

It may take two years, after which I shall try to get leave and perhaps to get married, for I am increasingly conscious, as Frank Sidgwick used to say, that “man is only half a pair”. Then I shall seek the fleshpots of India and the relative *otium cum dignitate*—repose and prestige of an Assistant Secretaryship in the Foreign Department, or a First Assistant in a Residency, with lots of clerks to help me and a chance to acquire polite accomplishments such as tennis, bridge, billiards, dancing and even public speaking in my own tongue instead of in Luri-Persian or Persian-Arabic.

‘The gods seem pleased with me, for the week’s mail brought a copy of a letter from the Foreign Office to the Treasury, drafted doubtless by Alwyn Parker, asking them to pay me whilst Deputy Commissioner at the rate of £800 a year in view of my special and indeed unique qualification and the fact that I had been detached “from more congenial duties” (!!) in Luristan.

‘Cox is on his way home; try to see him, for I owe him and Lady Cox much. He will be Foreign Secretary in Simla, his place at Bushire being taken by J. G. Lorimer, I.C.S. I have been with him up to the last moment, occupied wholly with

SIR PERCY COX

his work to the virtual exclusion of my own, for within 48 hours of my return he summoned me to Bushire to handle various questions with which I was almost as familiar as he was: he often says I am his *alter ego*. I do not in fact always agree with him, but when I do not he never fails to show me why he takes a particular view, and I can then draft telegrams and despatches in accordance with his views. He has been most kind and promises vaguely to find a niche for me in India—possibly in the Foreign Department which on the External side would suit us both as no one now in it has served outside India. But this is looking far ahead. I have never asked for a particular job yet, except Luristan, and then only because it was so unpleasant that I felt quixotically bound to volunteer, and I have never refused one—a weakness which brought trouble on me in London, you will remember. I am content to sweat at the task nearest to hand because, at heart, I enjoy sweating and I am sometimes guiltily conscious that I get more satisfaction from doing the job than from contemplating the benefits that it will confer on me, the Government and humanity at large.'



## CHAPTER X

DECEMBER 1913—OCTOBER 1914

### *The Demarcation of the Turco-Persian Frontier*

Lands intersected by a narrow forth  
Abhor each other. Mountains interposed  
Make enemies of nations who had else  
Like kindred drops been mingled into one  
COWPER, *The Task* (Bk. II).

IN this and the concluding chapter I abandon the diary-letter recital for another form of narrative, for two reasons:

- (1) The Foreign Office to whom the British Delegation of the International Commission reported, did not require a diary from me, and I did not therefore keep one.
- (2) The Secretary to the British Delegation, Mr. G. E. Hubbard, of the Levant Consular Service, has given the world in his delightfully written book, *From the Gulf to Ararat* (1916), a full account of our proceedings.

The frontier itself is of great antiquity; from Ararat southwards for some hundreds of miles it follows, in the main, the great watershed between the Tigris and the Euphrates to the west, and the Oxus and the inland lakes of Persia to the east. At some points, such as Kel-i-Shin, the present boundary line is where it was in the earliest recorded history of Sumeria and Assyria. At other points, especially in the region of the foot-hills, it has moved forwards and backwards, according to the relative strength of the limitrophe Powers, the stronger of which was never willing to restrict its future activities by a premature demarcation. Frontier incidents aroused

#### THE FRONTIER HISTORICALLY CONSIDERED

little interest, and no alarm, in the respective capitals of Turkey and Persia, for the mountain ranges along which the frontier ran had always been grazing-grounds of semi-nomadic Kurdish tribes, who owned only nominal allegiance to Shah or Sultan. The idea of a territorial boundary was secondary to the allegiance of the tribes who, in their wanderings in search of grass, could not, in practice, be expected to conform to an artificial frontier line. A watershed is not always, as we found to our cost in Alaska, synonymous with the visible crest of a range of mountains, for it may, in places, have captured in the course of ages a considerable area on the opposite side of the *chaîne magistrale*.

Both sides of the Zagros are sometimes in the occupation of the same tribe, whose winter habitat may be in one country, its summer residence in another. Rivers tend to unite, rather than divide, those who live on either bank. At no time was any 'simple' solution possible. The main chain of the Zagros, as formidable and well marked as the Pyrenees, was, however, the boundary between Assyria and Media and, though swept aside by invaders such as Alexander and Chingiz Khan and penetrated by the Arab invaders of Persia in the seventh century, it has always after a lapse of a generation or two reasserted its historical role. The Turkish and Persian Empires came into contact early in the sixteenth century when Persia was lifting her head after the devastation suffered at the hands of Mongols, who probably killed half the whole adult male population within a few years and reduced Iraq to a state of desolation from which it never recovered. At this moment Turkey was an aggressor State, her armies were at the gates of Vienna, her fleets in almost every port of the southern littoral of the Mediterranean. They were titular masters of Arabia and exercised authority on the coasts of Africa as far as Zanzibar and throughout Egypt. Sultan Sulaiman,

#### THE TREATY OF ERZERUM

known to Europeans as 'the Magnificent', took the provinces of N. Kurdistan and Azerbaijan and finally conquered Baghdad in 1534. Then the tide turned in favour of the Persian Shah Abbas, a man who played as great a part in the East as did Charlemagne in the West. Stability was only reached when Sultan Murad IV won Baghdad for Turkey, ousting the Persians, and settled the frontier by treaty upon lines which differ little from those in force to-day.

Two hundred years later Britain and Russia became involved in a succession of Turco-Persian frontier disputes. The frontier of Russia in the Caucasus ran with that both of Persia and Turkey, Russia having forcibly seized great areas from both Powers in the early years of the nineteenth century. British commercial interests in the Persian Gulf and Turkish Arabia, as Mesopotamia was officially called, were important and rapidly growing with the advent of steam vessels. Frontier incidents between Turkey and Persia became increasingly serious and Sir Stratford Canning, 'the great Elchi', and his Russian colleague endeavoured, with success, to induce the two parties to accept arbitration upon all frontier matters by an Anglo-Russian Commission, which met in 1847. The members were men of distinction—Britain being represented by Colonel Williams, the defender of Kars, and Robert Curzon, author of *Visits to Monasteries of the Levant*, a writer as distinguished as any of his countrymen who have since essayed to portray with the pen the grandeur and the misery, the glory and the squalour, the heights of nobility and the depths of shame which, though to be found equally contrasted in the West, seldom obtrude themselves so readily upon the notice of visitors from other climes. They sat for four years; their labour gave birth in 1847 to the Treaty of Erzerum which disposed of major issues. A new commission, on which Britain was represented by Colonel Williams alone, then

### THE D'ARCY OIL CONCESSION

attempted to delimit the frontier. After four years' work Colonel Williams abandoned in despair the attempt to pin the parties to an agreed line; desultory negotiations continued, only to be interrupted by the Crimean War, in which the Turkish and British delegates found themselves at war with Russia, and the British delegate almost simultaneously at war with Persia.

After peace had been declared work began again, and in 1869 the British and Russian surveyors produced, at vast cost, on the scale of one inch to the mile, a *Carte Identique* of the region on either side of the frontier—a strip some 25 miles broad. Some years later the Turkish and Persian Governments agreed that the frontier line would be found 'somewhere' upon this map. By 1885 Britain alone had spent over £100,000 upon attempts to promote between the two Powers an agreement which seemed as remote as ever.

As Persia grew weaker, frontier incidents became more serious, culminating in 1906 in a small-scale invasion of Kurdistan and Azerbaijan by Turkish regular and irregular soldiers. Britain and Russia redoubled their efforts and, in 1913, procured the consent of the Sublime Porte and the Imperial Persian Government to a definite frontier line from Fao on the Persian Gulf to Ararat in the north.

The frontier had by this time become a matter of the greatest importance to Britain. The D'Arcy Oil Concession of 1901 covered all that part of Persia bordering on Mesopotamia from near Khanaqin southwards. Wells had been sunk near Qasr-i-Shrin; it seemed likely that the oil-bearing region might be wholly excluded from Persia according to one interpretation; alternatively it might be wholly excluded from Iraq or again, as actually happened, fall partly in one and partly in the other.

It mattered less where the line should lie than that it should be laid down definitely somewhere, for, until that had been done, no development was possible. The British

## THE SHATT AL ARAB

Government secured its own interests and those of Mr. W. K. D'Arcy by obtaining from Turkey a formal undertaking that the D'Arcy Concession would be kept alive in any districts transferred *de jure* to Turkey from the *de facto* rule of Persia as a result of the arbitral labours of the British and Russian Commissioners.

The frontier on the Shatt al Arab was of even greater importance. For over fifty years the frontier had been held to run down the middle of the main channel, the *medium flum aquae* or *thal weg*; this interpretation was not entirely consistent with the wording of the Treaty of Erzerum but was a *modus vivendi* of long standing. The sovereignty of some islands was disputed, for the main stream had changed its course since 1869. The right of the Persian Government to control navigation was denied, probably upon good legal grounds, but modern steamships could not lie as of old in the mouth of the Karun opposite Mohammerah. They had to anchor in the main stream and thus *de jure* in Turkish waters.

A great refinery and oil port was in course of construction at Abadan; here too, unless some compromise could be reached, ships with cargoes for or from Persia would be lying under Turkish jurisdiction.

Finally, the growth of Abadan and of the average size of ocean-going steamers in Eastern waters, consequent upon the deepening of the Suez Canal, had brought into prominence the need for dredging the bar of the Shatt al Arab, and negotiations between the British and Turkish Governments to this end were well advanced. Until a final settlement had been reached nothing could be done in any of these matters.

With the final settlement (which left the river itself to low-water mark in Turkish hands, except the anchorages at Abadan and Mohammerah) Sir Percy Cox and I had been very closely concerned. We had kept the Foreign Office fully posted and Alwyn Parker of the F.O. and

## DIPLOMACY

Hakki Pasha, the Turkish Ambassador, between them had accepted, and the Persian Government had, much to its advantage, endorsed, nearly all our main contentions. The task of the British Commission was to give accurate and precise shape, and indisputable form, to an agreement already reached.

The whole complicated story, aggregating hundreds of pages of closely printed foolscap, was a good example of diplomatic method at the outset of the twentieth century. The aim of Britain and Russia was to promote peace between Persia and Turkey both in their own interests and those of other countries. They sought at every point a compromise between the outworn letter of treaties (of which in some cases not even original texts were available) and the needs of the present day; between the dubious facts of history and the sometimes disputable facts of geography. British interests are often referred to in the official papers of the time—they were greater in extent but not different in kind from those of all other maritime Powers, viz. freedom to trade and to promote the speedy movement of commerce over the high seas and international waters such as the Shatt al Arab from its mouth to the port of Basrah. The Baghdad Railway was, of course, also under discussion, and in no different spirit. Had not the War of 1914 intervened, this question, together with several others, would have been settled by mutual agreement.

Such was the background of the labours of the Turco-Persian Frontier Commission, so well described by Hubbard. My first concern was to do what I could to ensure that my own delegates and my Russian, Persian, and Turkish colleagues were comfortable. I spent a week pitching the tents in the desert upon carefully spit-locked lines, based upon my recollection of the Royal Camp at Rawal Pindi upon which I had worked with my Regiment when King George V as Prince of Wales visited

#### ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE COMMISSION

India in 1905. It was lit by electric light from the Oil Company's plant; patrolled by guards furnished by the Shaikh of Mohammerah. The Russian Commissioner, M. Minorsky, had asked me to obtain for him and his party tents and equipment identical with ours. The Persians (in Tehran) and the Turks (in Constantinople) had made a like request. They were not entirely satisfied; the Turks said that the tents were too large, the Persians that they were too small, the Russians that they were too cold. But within a month the three delegates had asked me to undertake to supply them with all fodder and grain needed for their escorts, and to make a single contract for all the pack-mules required. Not long after I was asked to provide them also with all their requirements of food, so far as it could be locally purchased, and I found myself disbursing £5,000 a month with the aid of one excellent clerk and my own Persian major-domo, of which 75 per cent. was recoverable from the other Commissions. I expected to have much trouble in securing reimbursement, but had none. The system involved a great deal of tedious work, but it prevented the various delegations from bidding against each other and saved money in other ways. I kept some check on outside contractors by licensing a few sutlers whose privilege it was to move (at their own cost) with us if they thought fit and to buy and sell miscellaneous goods and luxury articles for which I did not cater. The system worked well, and when Major-General (later Sir William) Birdwood, then Secretary to the Government of India in the Army Department, paid us a flying visit, he seemed to approve of what we had done.

Mr. A. C. Wratislaw, C.B., C.M.G., the British Commissioner, and his secretary Mr. G. E. Hubbard, both of the Levant Consular Service, were early on the spot. The last-named was unanimously invited to be Secretary to the Commission as a whole and to prepare after each

## THE COMMISSIONERS

meeting a *procès verbal* which was the sole official record of our proceedings.

Lt.-Col. C. H. D. Ryder, C.M.G., D.S.O., R.E., and Major H. W. Cowie, R.E., both of the Survey of India, were in charge of our India Survey Party and themselves undertook the major and minor triangulation. The other delegations were not strong on this side of their work; they readily elected him *doyen du corps technique* and allowed him, on the pretext of redrawing their maps, to correct them almost to the point of substituting the far finer work of our own skilled and accomplished Indian surveyors.

At an early stage one main cause of divergence was made clear. Our object, and especially mine, was to press forward with the task in hand and to lose not a day in completing it. The Commission had already been twice postponed. I promised Parker that I would do my best to finish it by the end of October before the snows. M. Minorsky was not in a hurry. He was a diplomat, but also a scholar of repute and an enthusiastic student of Oriental languages and ethnology. From Fao to Ararat would be, for him, a paradise of almost virgin soil. He envied me my past journeyings as much as I envied his erudition. He wished to obtain the fullest information upon a great variety of topics; his staff officers (among whom was a zoologist) also desired time to pursue their respective studies.

The Turks also were disinclined to hasten. They were men with military training and soldierly outlook. They enjoyed life in camp and the opportunities for shooting and sightseeing it afforded in countries in which the Turkish uniform was rarely seen; and they were welcomed wherever they went by the local Turkish officials.

The Persians were of a very different stamp—men of Tehran to whom camp life was distasteful and the prospect of a second year upon the frontier repellent. They were



## GOING OVER THE GROUND

prepared to take their full share, and to do the work thoroughly, but with a minimum of delay. And they found the heat of the Mesopotamian plains exhausting.

The outcome of these unstated and unspoken divergences of view was a compromise—we went somewhat slower than we might have done and we should probably have adjourned in the autumn of 1914, our work not yet completed, but for the outbreak of the European war in August 1914 which caused us all, by common consent, to do all in our power to complete a task which had so often in the past been similarly interrupted. Thanks to the experience and personalities of the four Commissioners and to our habit of entertaining each other both formally and informally whenever opportunity occurred, our proceedings were remarkably harmonious. Alcohol is a valuable industrial solvent; it was not less useful in our particular field.

In the second week of January Colonel Ryder went with me over the ground which I had previously reconnoitred from the northern edge of the Bisaitin marshes north-west of Hawizah, and thence to Basrah. From Aminiyeh (opposite Ahwaz) we went to an Arab camp of the Hardan tribe in the Raml-i-Shumakhneh, and thence to Kut Saiyid Ali on the Karkhah, passing vast flocks of sand-grouse which were assembling before pairing, and numbers of gazelle, pig, and hare. I little thought, as I made routine entries in my note-book, that a little more than a year later I should be leading a division of British troops over the same ground. *Mashhufs*—light marsh boats carrying from 5 to 25 cwt., with long projecting prows, pitched heavily on the outside, were in readiness to take us to Khafajiyah, where we were warmly received. Fifteen months later the very tribesmen with whom I had been on such good terms were induced by the Turks to attack the British column on its way to Amarah. We bombarded, burned, and destroyed

Khafajiyah. I am thankful to say that I was instrumental in saving the lives of a number of them who, partly in terror, partly out of sheer obstinacy, refused to surrender when surrounded. They had done their best to kill me—but that is another story.

Then to Bisaitin, a town of reed huts built just below water-level, a little ledge of mud sufficing to keep the water from flooding the huts. Here I made an excursion to the Mishdakh hills 6 miles to the north over steep sand-hills by the Darb ul Dawabb—the buffalo track—and heard of, but did not visit, reported pre-Islamic ruins in the Jabal Kahkaha, five hours march to the north. This trip probably saved my life when a cavalry patrol which I accompanied in May 1915 was cut off by tribesmen from Bisaitin. Thanks to my walk this day I knew the way to and through the sand-hills and was able to lead the patrol to safety.

Next day (Jan. 14th) we went to the Shatt al Ama' (blind river), a dry branch of the Duwairij which I had previously reported to be the ancient frontier between Turkey and Persia. It enters the marsh at Um Chir, not far from the tamarisk clump and spring of Qusaibah, 2 miles to the north.

In the distance we saw Jebel Fakkah which the Duwairij pierces; the ground was clearly a delta formation, flooded now and then by spill water from the main stream, some 30 yards broad and 4 or 5 feet deep. Nothing would be easier than to irrigate some thousands of acres at this point at negligible cost. The lie of the land favours it.

*'(Diary)* Returning to Bisaitin via Um Thaila we were met by 150 men of the Beni Turuf, carrying rifles, swords and fishing tridents, escorting their tribal standards one of which was a fine piece of salmon pink satin 8 feet square with green edges, carrying in the centre the crescent of Islam and the single star.

## THE BENI TURUF

'It appears that six sowars who had lagged behind my party or who had started late were waylaid by thirty Beni Lam sowars who deprived them of their horses, rifles and clothes. My Beni Turuf hosts, thinking that we had probably had a similar experience and actuated by a salutary fear of Shaikh Khazal's wrath, had hastily collected the local militia and were proceeding to our assistance. From a military point of view it was not an impressive gathering, but the scene as the warriors, shouting their war-cries in chorus, danced round their respective flags, brandishing their weapons, was picturesque in the extreme. The Beni Turuf have many fine-looking men amongst them and residing in the marshes in huts below water-level has not impaired their physique.

'From Bisaitin we went by boat to Shwaiyib near a small date grove which makes a fine landmark, passing various camps such as Machriyah, Jabal Shammariyah. At Shwaiyib I met a man reputed to be 130 years of age, who had grown a third set of teeth, as noted by Sir P. Cox in 1912 when he had visited the district. Here Colonel Ryder left me and I went on alone. Thence on foot to Hawizah, and thus to Um Tayfa, via Jufair, a long march over flat desert seamed with ancient canals and almost surrounded by sheets of fresh rain-water, on which flocks of duck were feeding. Here was Kushki-Hawizah, an ancient building now scarcely more than a mound, but in a fair state of preservation beneath the soil. Thence I made for the Karun.'

I rode on till nearly dusk, when I saw in the distance a flock of sheep which showed us that a camp must be near.

'(L., Jan. 14, 1914) I sent forward a horseman who found the camp in the sandhills. The headman lit a fire on top of a mound to show us the way in, and an hour after dark we arrived. I was shown to the Chief's tent, a "lean to" tent only 6 feet high, divided into two by a reed partition. A fire in the middle of brushwood, two carpets and some sacks of grain around. I was cordially welcomed, and for an hour or two squatted by the fire drinking coffee and tea with the Shaikh and half a dozen Arabs who talked of old times, the

## AMONG THE ARABS

weather, local politics, &c., with me. Sometimes I would hear one of them say in an aside to his companions—referring to me—"See how nicely he sits and drinks coffee and how he says 'God bless you, God be with you, and God be your joy' to the proper people, and 'Peace be with you' to the unworthy creatures" (i.e. the speaker's inferiors). "Fancy a foreigner—even though he is a Colonel—knowing all the rules of an Arab assembly!"

'Then I had dinner with them—rice with lumps of meat in it, eaten with the fingers of course—and finally went to sleep in my rug, to be awakened next morning by the bleating of lambs and kids and the slow stirring of the camp just before sunrise. My host brought me tea and with it came into the tent his small four-year-old son, in a dirty shirt. "Say how do you do to the Englishman," says his father. The child does so, and I reply. "Are you not afraid of him?" asks the father. "No," says the child "he talks our language." I beckoned him to come from his father's side to mine, which he did to his father's surprise and mine, and drank some tea at my hands. He sat on my knee for quite a long time. Finally I put a rupee in his hand—"a great big farthing" I called it, and told him not to look at it for five minutes or it would get smaller. I heard him, as he ran round to the other side of the tent, say to his mother: "See, I have a great big farthing. What shall I do with it?" After which he went the round of his family.'

This trip saved the Commission as a whole from a very difficult journey. Our report was accepted by our colleagues as authoritative and they were content to erect pillars at the less inaccessible spots and to draw the frontier, through the marsh, on paper. That chief and his people, I am glad to say, were not dragged into war by the Turks in 1914 and I was able to protect them.

In the last week of January we laid the first pillar of the frontier on the left bank of the Shatt al Arab.

(*L., Feb. 2, 1914*) The Shaikh gave a great feast in our honour. Four sheep, twenty lambs roasted whole, fifty

## A UNIVERSAL PROVIDER

chickens, twenty ducks, great copper dishes, 3 feet in diameter, piled high with rice. The serving-men were negroes, who with their loose trousers tucked into their belts picked their way across the great leather cloth on the ground, tearing great pieces of hot meat from the carcasses with their bare hands and placing them, with a hospitable smile, upon the favoured guest's plate.'

A week later I wrote:

'I have abandoned diplomacy to Wratislaw, entrusted surveys to Ryder, the maintenance of official records to Hubbard, pounding aperients for camp followers to our doctor, Pierpoint of the I.M.S., and camp discipline to Lt. Brooks of the 18th Bengal lancers. I am now a cross between a Commissary and a Transport Sergeant. The Turks give me no trouble; the Russians and Persians regard me as a local Mr. Whiteley, the Universal Provider. A kitten is wanted by Madame Minorsky, a most accomplished young bride; the Persians want cooking-pots and some uniform cases of japanned iron with their names engraved on brass plates *in Persian* as well as French. Madame wants Cooper's Marmalade and as much in the way of tinned food as her husband will allow her to take; the Persians want several cases of Benedictine, and so on. These things take up more time than greater matters, but probably matter more at this stage.'

On March 12th I was able to write from the banks of the River Tib, on the borders of Pusht-i-Kuh:

'We have demarcated nearly 250 miles of frontier already and I have no reason to complain of our colleagues. Perhaps because they have not been very comfortable they have now put themselves in my hands as far as concerns camp sites and the length of marches. All the 300-odd pack animals are in my charge and all food contracts, which are working well, though we are 50 miles at least from the nearest small township. Our meetings are lengthy, extending sometimes till midnight, and the arbitral powers of the British and Russian Commissioners have been freely used; for our Turkish and Persian colleagues, armed with instructions from their

## A REPORT OF PROGRESS

respective Foreign Offices to insist on this or that, have not felt able to compromise and prefer to compel us to enforce a decision, which they cheerfully accept after a few formal words of protest.

'Wratislaw's health improves daily; he and Hubbard do *all* the diplomatic work; Ryder and his really first-class staff do almost all the Survey work; my admirable Indian clerk does all the typing—in French and English—and keeps the accounts. I play the part of Martha, "cumbered with much serving".

'We have the usual incidents of camp life in Persia. Two mules stolen one night; a storm blows up at night and the urban occupants are discomfited by the failure of the tent pegs to hold, or the breakage of the pole; I am asked to provide a new one and help them to pitch the tent afresh.

'The Wali undertakes to provide guides who will indicate the extent of his ancestral acres and proprietary rights in Turkey at Badrai; the guides lose their way after keeping a distinguished bevy of diplomatists trailing for hours behind them in a maze of ancient canals and fictitious landmarks.

'We have just decided by arbitration a piece of frontier that has been disputed for seventy years. It was settled on the lines I suggested three months ago as a result of study of the papers, but my satisfaction is tempered by the fact that the Russian Commissioner accuses me of "imposing my views" on Mr. Wratislaw, and of forcing my opinions down the throats of all concerned, whereas I have simply let the suggestions germinate and bear fruit.

'I am off to-morrow with my three colleagues, all "deputies", on a three days' trip to erect boundary pillars along the portion of the frontier we have just settled.

'Things are going so easily now that I feel I could be better employed elsewhere, e.g. in Luristan or in Bushire as Assistant to Cox's successor Lorimer, and I have said so much to the Government of India. It may seem quixotic to offer to throw up a good job because someone else can do it, but now that everything is fully organized there is little for me to do that Wratislaw or Ryder, Hubbard or Brooks could not do just as well.

## THE MORAL OF ULSTER

'I am glad you both met Sir Percy and Lady Cox, but I was rather appalled at the thought of Sir Percy Cox listening to the recital of my private letters to you and Papa. He has strict views as to what one may say, outside official circles, of official things. I hope, and am sure, that you were discreet in your selections. I care so much for what I am doing that my letters inevitably have a rather egoistic touch, of which I am not ashamed as long as they are addressed to you—"a man should rejoice in his works for that is his portion", as the author of Ecclesiastes says—but to read them to my Chief sounds to me a little dangerous, charitable though he be.'

'(Later) I have had a long letter from Cox telling me of his official conversations at home and of his meeting with you. He has heard by telegram of my proposed resignation and disapproves of any change; he writes telling me to stick to it as the Government of India should have the fullest possible information as to the northern half of the frontier and will get little unless I am on the spot.'

'(L., Apr. 9) You and Papa are too wise to require the moral to be pointed, but the moral of Ulster—as applied to Eastern countries—appears to me to be that "representative government" on conventional lines is not a panacea when different nationalities and different religions have to be dealt with in a single region. If the Irish, who are civilized, cannot agree to govern themselves by means of a single Parliament, how much less should we expect peoples with even deeper tribal and religious divisions, to do so.

'The "problem of Ulster" exists in Persia, Turkey, India, S. Africa, and probably in many other places. We must seek some other panacea than what we now call "representative" or "parliamentary" institutions, and must free ourselves from the ancient belief that British institutions can be transplanted or reproduced elsewhere with advantage.'

'(L., Apr. 21. *Near Khanaqin*) Wratislaw has been taken ill and has gone to Baghdad; I hope he will rejoin us, for I do not trust myself to do as well as he in negotiation with Minorsky and the other Commissioners who are all nearly old enough to be my father except Minorsky, and even he invariably adopts the paternal role in dealing with me.

## THE KURDS

If Wratislaw decides to go and if I take on this job as Principal British Commissioner I shall cut down the size of our camp, our escort and even our British staff by half in order to speed things up.

'This is part of the "Transferred Territories", and by an evil chance it has fallen to me to deal with this most knotty problem which Wratislaw would probably have handled better.

'I went to see the oil wells at Qasr-i-Shirin run by a single British engineer, right away from civilization, in a howling wilderness, but everything spick and span and showing the pride of a man in his work; an oasis in a country like this where everything has gone or is going to rack and ruin, and where everyone is hopelessly demoralized. Such men are real missionaries, and one could not help noticing that the local native employees were appreciably the better men for being under the influence of steady work and showed plenty of aptitude and intelligence.

'From here onwards the tribes are Kurds, a race apart from Persians and with some European characteristics. I have never had anything to do with them so far, and wish that I had more time to spare from the routine of camp administration to enable me to study them more closely. I envy Minorsky, who talks Kurdish indefatigably and is more interested in them, I believe, than in the frontier.'

My main task was to induce my colleagues to place on record a definition, with map, of the territories transferred to Turkey by virtue of the agreement of 1912 to which we were now giving effect. This was of the greatest importance to the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, a controlling interest in which had just been or was about to be acquired by the Treasury, for they were entitled, by a separate agreement, to construct a pipe-line thence through Mesopotamia to the coast. Another company held a concession for the rest of the wilayets of Baghdad and Mosul and, as between the respective rights of these companies, the verdict of the Commission would be final.



## FIVE REPORTS IN HAND

I obtained such a definition and secured the signature of the Russian Commissioner to a map. To my extreme disappointment, two years later, the map and therefore the definition proved inadequate; the surveyors on whom I perforce relied did their work badly. Had Wratislaw not gone sick I should have supervised their work myself. The definition and map were in fact defective because both M. Minorsky and I felt ourselves bound by our instructions and by the opinions expressed by our Governments in 1869 to limit the 'Transferred Territories' to the western edge of the identic map which, itself, was most unreliable. The whole question was reopened after Iraq became independent and has since been settled upon common-sense lines.

*'(L., May 15, 1914)* The other Commissioners, as they approach Ararat, are getting nearer to their respective homes—but we are going daily farther from ours. But the heat and the fatigue of marches in the hills make them fractious and I am correspondingly liberal with my main prescription, alcohol, at all meetings of the Commission. Whenever I am president I keep my colleagues plied with liquor, which helps them to retain a sense of proportion. But I drink only water till the sun has gone down.

*'Hitherto we have had little mountain scenery to divert the eye, but from now onwards we shall be either amongst or in sight of the finest peaks of the Zagros, which culminate in Ararat.*

*'I received last mail a 300-page printed Report of mine on Fars, which I wrote last year, for proof-reading. They demand an Index also!*

*'In addition to this I have on the stocks (1) a report on this frontier—rather an elaborate document; (2) a report on the Luristan railway question; (3) a Muskat report; (4) a report on birds and beasts seen by us all up to date on the frontier. So I have my hands full.'*

*'(L., May 18)* I gather that as good Liberals you sympathize with the Englishmen who have been deported from S. Africa,

## THE RULE OF LAW

as you did with the Bengali, Ghose, who murdered several Englishmen, if I remember right, and the leaders of the Women's Suffrage movement who threaten to use methods similar to those used in an earlier day by the Irish Fenians who first brought dynamite into politics at home.

'My daily task, on the other hand, in common with all members of the Indian Political Department, is to urge men to settle their differences otherwise than by force and to replace force, as an instrument of change, by administrative action in harmony with or even in advance of public opinion; and to invoke police or military assistance only in the last resort, and even then be most sparing in using it.

'Yet every successful resort to force by political extremists in Europe, telegraphed and trumpeted abroad, recorded in the callow press of other countries, is held up by the exponents of violence in Russia, in the Balkans, in Turkey, Persia, India as an example to be followed, backed with quotations from the speeches of British statesmen and journalists making excuse for violence, claiming that a good cause justifies the means and that it is right in politics to do evil that good may come, and extolling crime when used as a political instrument as virtue, and political criminals as national heroes.

'The contradiction between these two outlooks is sharp, and cannot be resolved. I accept it as necessary and inevitable but it weakens the forces of order and it challenges the rule of law.

'The country through which we are now passing is one of the finest in the world—unlimited water, fine plains, splendid grazing—yet it is almost deserted, and has no greater population than many deserts. It was very highly cultivated less than fifty years ago, but the hand of the Central Government has weakened since then and the tribes, released from the hard yoke of their Government, have fallen under a still harder scourge—their own lawless passions and fondness for violence. Inter-tribal feuds and raids have desolated the land and only the ruins of villages remain as mute witnesses that man cannot live even in primitive societies without a strong central government.'

## THE MEDIANS

‘(L., May 18. Lat. 35°) It is very hot and weekly thunderstorms give only temporary relief, besides being a great nuisance. Yesterday a sudden rain-storm came down and loosened the pegs—before we had time to hammer them in (we were on very stony ground) a veritable hurricane struck us, snapping the poles, uprooting tents, and in a couple of minutes half the camp was laid flat. This is really a blessing in disguise, for had the tents not fallen they would have been ripped up. An hour later absolute calm supervened and it was difficult to imagine that so much damage had been wrought in so short a time.

‘Wratislaw returns next week, the better, I hope, for a rest at Baghdad. I shall be glad to hand over the diplomatic discussions to him. I always dislike committees, and my prejudice against them is stronger than ever, though I have, in fact, made good progress and got my way hitherto by force of argument; but I want to move quicker than my colleagues.

‘We are pleasantly camped on the Turkish side of the frontier on the slopes of hills overlooking a great plain, surrounded on three sides by high mountains, still partly snow-covered, which water the plain by rivulets coming down lovely valleys. The plain is covered with great mounds, of Assyrian and pre-Assyrian origin, for the plain is reputed to be one of the birth-places of civilization, so fertile is it and so secure from invasion. The people have retained a form of speech which is akin to Media—the language of Zoroaster—and they wear a quite antiquated form of garment, cotton sleeves with V-shaped cuffs reaching to the ground, which are tied up behind the neck when a man is at work.

‘We now embark on the most difficult bit of frontier, high mountains, bad roads, short supplies. The compensations—scenery, height above sea-level and consequent coolness.’

‘(L., June 1. *Kermanshah*) So soon as Wratislaw returned to duty I kicked up my heels like a colt and came here—112 miles in 3 days, 14 hours riding a day—to get cash and make purchases for all my colleagues. The track lay through very hilly country, well wooded, and dotted with villages on terraced slopes, surrounded with orchards. Snow on the hills

## A HAPPY VALLEY

above, and a big river just visible in the valley 3,000 feet below. The track was so bad that one of my mules, though very lightly laden, fell over the edge and was killed. We crossed a swollen river by a rickety two-plank bridge. If the horses had been fresh they would never have crossed, but they were so tired that they did not look twice at it. Then up 3,000 feet through oak forest and so on till dusk when we reached easier ground and camped in fine pasture near Nausud village. The second day was up a valley full of little prosperous villages and orchards, waterfalls here and there and flowers in abundance—yellow dog-roses besides the white and pink kind, irises and many English flowers. We left this valley to pass for some hours at the foot of a high mountain through almost virgin forest; a great variety of trees, with may-trees in full bloom, thicker than I seem to remember them in England, and smelling stronger. Another 4 hours over level cultivated plain brought us to Rawansir, where the Karkhah River takes its source. A series of springs gush out at the foot of the hill, forming instantly a river 3 feet deep and 50 yards wide. The village is close by and the wife of the owner, in the latter's absence, sent out night watchmen for me with bread, cheese and curds. The third day was 12 hours riding over a flat plain covered with ruined villages, the product of a visitation by the Constitutional and Monarchical armies last year.'

('L., June 7. *Sanandij, Kurdistan*) I spent two pleasant days with the Dewar-Duries in the Bank House at Kermanshah. I told him what I wanted and he got it for me; I did not have to leave his garden or bargain with anyone. I am now on my way back with £2,000 in silver (three mule loads), and compelled to stop here because my trusted headman Mirza Daud has fever. Our local agent has lent me his fine house and garden and is entertaining us in true Persian fashion—which is both generous and tactful. A few hours ago I called on the Governor, one Sardar Muhi, formerly a warlike constitutionalist and patriot. Like most modern political patriots he found the profession a profitable one and in a few years amassed much wealth, did the grand tour in Europe and has now obtained this post. He began well enough, but he lacks the

## VIOLENCE

strength of purpose to pursue the strait and narrow way that leads to the restoration of order. Such men make one despair of Persia ever regaining her position; they are the pick of the "Young Persians", but they have not half the vigour and little of the skill of the old Persians.

'Your letter of May 7th arrived yesterday via Tabriz and Sauj Bulaq—by the hand of a Russian officer. It makes sad reading. My sympathies are with Ulster, though I do not agree as to their methods. Violence brings its own reward—reprisals and a legacy of bitterness which will take years to efface. And threats of violence do not greatly differ in effect. On the other hand I am, quite seriously, sufficiently ashamed at the dishonourable behaviour of our lawyer politicians to feel that no army officer would rightly do otherwise than the officers of troops in Ireland did when asked to choose between dismissal or some indefinite "action" in Ulster—i.e. prefer dismissal. In such a position I should do likewise. An officer and a soldier, when assisting the Civil power, is bound to use his own judgement when called on by superior authority to take action involving loss of life, and may be tried for murder—and condemned—if he kills a man unjustifiably, even if ordered to do so. This being the law, one is clearly not justified in pledging oneself beforehand to execute measures not specified in aid of a Civil power not yet threatened.

'There are 70 Russian and 200 Persian Cossacks here under Russian Colonels. Both the Russians are pleasant people, but they are not likely to do much good in this wretched country, on which they are living. I attended a garden-party given by one of them yesterday, and it was curious to notice how easily the Russian, who is not a European, assimilated his ways to those of Persians. The latter feel him to be much more one of themselves: this makes the assimilation of Persia by Russia comparatively much easier from one point of view. Persians recognize English people as belonging to a different plane of civilization and therefore seek, alas! to imitate our institutions sometimes, but consider Russians no better than themselves.

'I have spent the day receiving local notables, all alike lamenting the insecurity and disorder to which they

themselves have contributed and which they have not the strength of purpose to suppress. I will send you some photographs soon.'

'(L., June 13) Since I last wrote I have had a long and adventurous journey of over 100 miles. I left Sanandij with 60 Russian Cossacks under a Colonel and 10 Persian cavalry under a Captain (they were going to Mariwan and invited me to join them). Also the Deputy Governor and some notables. These came out in our honour and gave us dinner the first day out. They relied on me to tell them the proper stages. I suggested two long marches; they hesitated, and so I said I would go on alone—much to their surprise.

'My reason for making long stages was to ensure that I should be ahead of rumours about myself, and thus minimize the risk of plots of local tribesmen to waylay me. By starting before daybreak, making a halt by day, and arriving after dusk, the inhabitants of the villages where I stopped did not have a chance of observing the loads which, being very heavy and compact, they might have recognized as either ammunition or silver, both desirable booty. I did my best to disguise the silver by securing each case to a board and surrounding it on three sides with sugar so that it looked like the sack of sugar in which it was hidden. But the weight would have betrayed it if handled.

'The Russian Cossacks behind me were less fortunate: they were roughly handled, and have not yet been able to reach us. There is a strong anti-Russian feeling prevalent here which only needs an excuse to burst out, and it is very unpleasant for us to be yoked with Russians.

'I reached the Commission after three marches of 30 miles each and one of 40. For the latter I changed horses, mules, and servants completely on arrival at a small camp of ours at Panjwin. I got safely down to the plains after an eight-hours' climb over the mountains, by a devious path scarcely better than a goat-track. The last two hours were in the dark, and had a mule slipped it would have gone a mile downhill, and we should have had to wait till next day before recovering it and its valuable load.

'I started again at 4 a.m. and after an hour's march saw,

## IN SOLE CHARGE

to my delight, the British Commission coming in the opposite direction so; I handed over my specie to them and returned with them to Panjwin and had a good rest that night in a graveyard, a type of place which we often select because it is only there that trees are allowed to grow to their full height. They are never fenced; but are usually in places with beautiful views, on some spur overlooking a village—never near a mosque. I wish English cemeteries were as restful and pleasantly designed. I am anxious about the Russians, who are likely to have trouble. They are amongst the tribes and seem afraid to go on and too proud to go back.

'The quality of *The Times* has fallen in proportion to its price. The old Foreign Editor has gone and seems to have taken the proof-readers with him. The foreign news is less well edited and written than of old. I notice many avoidable errors, partly typographical; and its leaders strike a new and to me harsh note. Please send me in future *The Morning Post* also: it has a reputation for independence.'

'(L., July 4) We are moving more slowly than I could wish. I am in sole charge as Wratislaw has left us, having been recalled and promoted to an even better paid job—a curious reversal of my own ideas, for a few weeks ago I was urging that I was superfluous and that he should carry on. The F.O. have given me a rise of half the difference between my pay and his, which is generous. I have taken over at a difficult time, for we are entering the Russian zone and Minorsky naturally wishes to play the leading role but finds it hard to do so because I am the organizer of transport, the supplier of food and fodder, and Ryder the head of the thoroughly efficient survey section, and the Turks and Persians prefer that we should continue to be so. M. himself is most efficient, but not so his staff.

'I am using fair means and foul to spur on my colleagues, camping where there are no provisions or arranging for reserves of food at longer intervals than they would wish. The Russian Commissioner doubled his escort, but gave me no notice, so I find it difficult to meet his demands for fodder and food. It is not pleasant to be allied to Russia even for the limited purpose of arbitration on a Frontier Commission;

## TEMPORARY WIVES

local feeling is strongly against them, whereas we have a good reputation and are relatively popular, and our Indian Moslem guard adds greatly to the respect in which we are held. They are good Ambassadors, clean, cheerful, honest and devout, good horsemen and good shots. All they need to make them perfectly happy is a wife in every village or town we visit, but in this country even temporary substitutes (or *sigha* wives) are unobtainable. This Persian system of allowing men to marry, temporarily, a woman who may later be divorced sounds immoral but, human nature being what it is, it is a compromise between the impracticable ideal of celibacy and the undesirable practice of promiscuity. Our Indian officers and some sergeants have each acquired a *sigha* who unobtrusively accompanies the baggage like a *vivandière* and is referred to politely as a "cook".

‘(L., July 28) I have read with intense interest of the acquisition by the Treasury of a controlling interest in the A.P.O.C. which will now have no difficulty

- (1) in raising extra capital
- (2) in remaining British
- (3) in securing diplomatic and if need be military support if internal disturbances threaten to hinder or stop work in Persia.

‘On the other hand the Government may in practice find it harder to exercise diplomatic pressure on behalf of a company which it controls than in the interest of a company in which it has no shareholding. Moreover, its control is hedged round with limitations so great that it is in fact no greater for practical purposes than the influence which any government can exercise upon any large company which looks or may look to government for support; and it might in certain circumstances lead to difficulties with foreign oil companies and therefore with foreign governments. It is a strange reversal of the established order that such a step should be taken by a Liberal Government.

‘I see that Sir E. Grey referred in Parliament to a communication which had "just reached him from the British Commissioner". That was my telegram about the "Transferred Territories".’



## AUGUST 1914

On August 4th the Great War began. We were near Ushnu, camped near a Russian detachment.

‘(L., Aug. 5) They should not of course be here, but the country is tormented by dissensions and intrigues and the presence of an organized foreign force prevents the growth of anarchy. I write at the foot of the snow-capped range which forms the frontier, overlooking a fine plain 4 miles broad, dotted with villages and seamed by mountain streams which irrigate a great area and finally end in the salt Urmi Lake.’

A few days before war broke out M. Minorsky and I differed as to some point on which we had been instructed to arbitrate and thereupon referred it to our respective Governments as required by the Protocol. I was annoyed to receive an immediate reply ordering me ‘to give way *on all points* to my Russian colleague’ who, after a fresh attempt to reach agreement, had in fact just given way, on most points, to me. The Foreign Office was of course clearing the way for the great events that were to follow by disposing summarily of all minor matters. Neither of us, however, had any idea that war was even probable, for we had received no telegrams or letters for over a fortnight.

The news reached us on August 12th. On August 15th I wrote from Urmi:

‘We have spent ten days here and the change to a rather damp climate, high feeding and much entertaining of Russian and American and English missionaries here, after a more or less Spartan life at high and dry altitudes on the frontier, has been bad for us mentally and physically.

‘We have seen a great deal of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Mission to the Nestorians here—two English priests. Spearing and Barnard, very High Church (I went to communion in their little church last Sunday) but very pleasant persons, unassuming, sociable, and glad, I think, to see us. They are coming out into camp with us for some days. We

have been giving them a good deal of surplus gear useful to them and I think our stay will be long remembered. They are primarily an educational mission to the Nestorian Church and do not proselytize—that they leave to their American colleagues.

‘The news of the war has of course eclipsed all else. It has been received with astonishment. I realize to the full, I think, what it involves—at the best—for all countries concerned. Only persons, wilfully blind to facts, refused to see that Germany was intent on fighting us—when *she* was ready—and I know enough of diplomacy to be convinced that she has for years been a danger to the peace of Europe. Her constant appeal to force has had a bad effect all round, and her influence on Turkey has been equally bad. All official Germans in Turkish service are Chauvinists. But after what I have seen of Russia I do not fancy her as an ally.

‘From the internal point of view, a war may do good by forcing everyone to face the realities of life. There will be a lowering of the standard of comfort all round for some years, no doubt, and vast loss of life; but we don’t deserve our present prosperity and it may do good.

‘The Navy and Army will be fighting to save the Liberal Party as well as the country from extinction. Had the Conservatives been “in” the attitude of the Liberals towards national foreign policy would have been very different.

‘The Marconi affair, which has penetrated to the uttermost ends of the earth to our national disgrace, the irresponsible way in which Lloyd George last year *and again on July 20th this year*, announced that we should reduce our naval expenditure thanks to the satisfactory state of our relations abroad—statements which were not sanctioned by Sir E. Grey, but politically convenient—have aroused feelings that not even a change of Ministers will entirely eradicate.

‘Our action in supporting France and Russia has taken most foreigners here by surprise. *Perfide Albion* is a phrase which represents a very widespread belief that immediate self-interest alone governs our actions, and this war will do good if it reminds Continental nations that treaties made with us must be respected. It has always been, I believe, an article

## GERMANY IN 1914

of faith with the Germans that the neutrality of Belgium, though guaranteed by Treaty, could be infringed with impunity.

'Minorsky has behaved magnanimously. He is now as determined as I am to finish the job, war or no war, by the end of October. All the officers of the British Commission are military officers except Hubbard, and Minorsky has kept us in close and friendly touch with the Russian Army here with whom we dine, and dance Cossack dances and (I am sorry to say sometimes) drink. I introduced a whole Brigade to the prophylactic virtues of the "prairie oyster" (a raw egg in a wineglass, with Worcester sauce and red pepper) as a counterblast to excess of vodka. I gave the Brigade Commissioner one: he was so pleased that he ordered 150 eggs to be brought and a quantity of the equivalent of Worcester sauce and made me, standing on a chair, show them how it was made, and consumed.

'Captain Dyer, my Transport officer and an expert at his job, showed himself in a new light, dancing Cossack dances so expertly that when he changed hats and tunics with his neighbour he might have been mistaken for one of them.'

'(L., Aug. 21) We witnessed to-day an almost total eclipse of the sun. . . . I long to finish this job. I want to chuck the Political Department and go back to a fighting unit. That is what I went to Sandhurst for; it is the best and cleanest job there is, and I shall be glad to receive orders for a time instead of giving them—often very unpalatable ones.'

'(L., Aug. 31) Please send me *The Nation* for a few months. It is sure to be anti-war, and it will do me good to see it argue that we should do nothing and allow Europe to fight it out, as if we were not part of Europe.

'On the other hand, I am not anxious to see Germany and Austria utterly crushed on land: they are *essential to the* stability of Europe, and though they have for long badly needed a sharp lesson in international manners and in morals, and though Germany has long been threatening us, the crushing of these two Powers would be bad for Europe and for civilization. The best thing that can happen is for Germany

### A 'DANGEROUS' MAN

to be unable to make headway in Europe, lose her colonies, commerce and fleet, and then make peace. It will give a crushing blow to militarism, and if this much is effected the war will have been worth while.

'I have just finished a long "arbitration" case affecting about 8 miles of frontier, the Turks and Persians both putting forward unreasonable and untenable claims, apparently out of spite; both sides rather bellicose, due to the new atmosphere created by the war in Europe. We have given our decision, more or less displeasing to both parties, and tomorrow we shall go up the hills to put up the pillars and carry our decision into effect. For the moment I am apparently regarded by both parties as a "dangerous" man, both sides alleging privately that I have undue influence over my Russian colleague and ascribing unfavourable decisions to me. A few months ago he was saying the same thing about me.

'Our work is drawing to a close. Only some 60 miles separate us from Ararat, which we can see standing in lonely grandeur on the horizon. Then we return to the Gulf, a weary march of about 1,000 miles, by what route I cannot yet say. It depends on the attitude of Turkey.

'I shall be as glad as anyone to see the end. To quote Matthew Arnold

The long continued attitude of rule  
Leaves me austerer, sterner, than I would.

All my officers want to go back to India to rejoin their regiments. I have let them all go, with the escort and mules, leaving only Colonel Ryder and me with Hubbard to carry on. We hope to return via Turkey, otherwise 1,000 miles by horse and mule across Persia. We can let our surveyors go too, for they can now see Ararat—the first properly fixed point they have come across for 300 miles, and thus connect up their triangulation from the Persian Gulf (where our position was telegraphically fixed). It is the first series of regular triangles between the Survey of India system and that of Europe. The enclosed telegram speaks for itself.'

(*To Foreign Office. Telegram. Sept. 6*) 'Hubbard severely wounded by Kurds on August 31st. He went out with a

### ATTACK BY KURDS

shooting party of four other British officers, with friendly local villagers, in a ravine close to camp, 20 m. SSE. Kotur, 10m. E. of frontier. He was himself unarmed. When less than 2 miles from camp, party was suddenly attacked at close range by about ten Kurds from neighbouring encampment.

'About thirty aimed shots were fired, several at 50 yards range in broad daylight. Bullet fired at 400 yards struck Hubbard, passing between two fingers of right hand and damaging them but not severely, and piercing right thigh. Latter wound severe, sciatic nerve being apparently severed. No other casualties. As it is absolutely essential that he should have the best possible medical attention till he can reach London, I have directed Captain Pierpoint, I.M.S., accompanied by servant to proceed on duty with him to London by easy stages.

'We hope to move him to Khoi in four or five days time and thence to Julfa by motor-car en route Tiflis and Batum.

'Six men implicated have been arrested and are in custody. I have taken their evidence and propose to send them with others whom I hope to have captured shortly to Tabriz via Khoi under guard with Capt. Dyer.

'Motive for attack is not clear but plainly premeditated; probably made by members of Persian Shikak tribe so as to get local Persian chief friendly to Russians into trouble with latter, for whom tribesmen appear to have mistaken us. Despatch follows. At time of occurrence I was with my colleagues on a Sub-Commission on difficult part of Frontier some 30 miles off and only heard of it yesterday on my return, messenger having failed to reach me. Hence delay in reporting matter.

'Please inform Mrs. Hubbard, with expression of my profound regret and sympathy.

'I have no time to add more except that he has been suffering great pain which he bears with marvellous fortitude, a great example to us all.'

'(To my brother Hugh, Sept. 29.) I am surprised and delighted to hear of you and Steuart "going for a soldier". I hope to join you in France. I am full of trouble. Firstly my

### ‘GRATEFUL TO THE WAR’

Secretary very badly wounded; secondly *entente cordiale* dinners at which I find it very difficult to keep sober without giving offence. Thirdly I am almost single-handed, for all my staff have gone to the war.

‘As to my views on the war I agree with all the F.O. has done—it is the logical outcome of our policy since 1904, steadily pursued. I am grateful to the war for

(1) Scotching the Ulster-Ireland question. If the mental attitude of the Irish towards the Empire changes, Home Rule is possible; and I think good Imperialists may be able, after the war, to agree to it, though administratively it is a very poor scheme, and I doubt if the Irish will appreciate it.

(2) Squashing dealers in sentimentality, cant, paradox, &c. Surely after this war and the revelations that it has brought about we shall hear less of H. G. Wells, G. B. Shaw, and all that tribe of phrase-makers and cuttle-fishes who, when I was last in England, seemed to me to monopolize such a large proportion of our reviews and press, and to have such a hold upon the reading public [I was plainly wrong there].

(3) Making us a nation again—and an Empire—and for many other benefits. We shall need a change of Cabinet before long, however.

‘I do not want to see Germany crushed altogether on land I think—I may be quite wrong—that she is a necessary equipoise to Russia. I want to see her fleet restricted by Treaty, and the Kaiser in Elba. I should like to see Heligoland dismantled and turned into a Dutch bathing-place. Also Alsace-Lorraine given back to France—but for the rest I am not keen on Germany in Europe being altogether abolished, though she must presumably lose her colonies. Russia is our ally to-day, but she must I think always be opposed to us in details, in needs, and in feelings; the more I see of Russians the more I am convinced of this, and so I do not want to expose Europe to a Slav menace more than necessary.’

‘(To my father, Sept. 21:Kholi) Everything is disorganized, even the sacred F.O. messengers no longer move in their appointed courses.

‘I am sorry to hear that England will be a transformed country when I come back. I have no doubt that it will be

## A REDUCED ARMY

a change for the good. I am not surprised that people are nervous. They have supported cheerfully for years and returned to power at a recent election a Government which has

- (1) abolished six of the best of our Line Regiments,
- (2) abolished many batteries of Artillery,
- (3) reduced the effective strength of existing Regiments,
- (4) abandoned the Two Power standard,
- (5) discharged thousands of men from Woolwich Arsenal,
- (6) tried to reduce the Indian Army in spite of the gravest warnings from all experts.

A very grave responsibility rests on those who for the past ten years have voted for such measures. Even now there is clearly a great deal of apathy in England. 266,000 men in a month or more is nothing to boast about.

‘However, if only the war puts out of business men who make a living by representing the worse to be the better thing, it will be almost worth while.

‘Turkey’s attitude is doubtful and on this frontier we have two irresponsible and aggressive armies—Turkey and Russia—facing each other and positively searching for quarrels.

‘I can never make plans more than a few hours ahead, and find the situation a very tiring one. However, it will be over soon.

‘I quite agree with what you say about military service—I have been a member of the National Service League for five years now.

‘Alas that everyone in power spurned the prophets—Lord Roberts and hundreds of others. Alas that those who reduced Army and Navy to serve their own selfish ends should be in power now, and perhaps for some years to come.

‘It makes me indignant to read the boasts of Ministers as to what they are doing to ensure the success of the war when I remember the numberless things they have done, for years past, to reduce our strength, not from conviction that it was desirable but because it was politically expedient.

‘I agree that “I told you so” is a profitless form of re-  
crimination, but it is the basis of the electoral system. I hope

#### REQUIRED IN INDIA

the public will remember that they and their Ministers have sinned against the light, and must pay accordingly.

'I would gladly go to Europe to the war as a private or otherwise, but the Government of India is allowing none of its officers to do so. All are required in India, it seems. I have told India that everything here will be finished by the end of December, and they can reckon on me for military duty from that date.'

Here my series of letters for the year 1914 ends. The rest of the story is briefly told in the following chapter.



## CHAPTER XI

### *From Mount Ararat to Basrah via London and Archangel*

THE last protocols and maps of the Turco-Persian Frontier were signed not far from Bayazid at the foot of Mount Ararat on October 27th. Of the British Commission only Colonel Ryder and I remained. We sent our servants and horses back to the Persian Gulf via Tabriz and Isfahan, giving away or handing to the British Consul-General at Tabriz all our camp gear and much else not worth the cost of transport. This done, we bade a ceremonious farewell to our colleagues; the compliments we exchanged were not empty. Every one of them individually had earned our respect and some of them our affectionate regard. The personnel of each Commission was *tout à fait de son pays*—typical and not unworthy samples of their respective countries. The Turks were the best sort of 'simple soldier'; the Persians had the charm, good manners, and acute intelligence of that gifted nation. Monsieur Minorsky's staff officers were genial, human souls, and always good company, though in intellect and force of character he was far above them. Colonel Ryder and I were often twitted with being *très anglais*, and took it as a compliment to be so described. We had reason too to be proud of our joint work as an *ad hoc* international body. We had brought to a successful conclusion a task which had defied the efforts of at least four international bodies during the preceding century, and we had done it well. It is pleasant to record some twenty-five years later that the line we demarcated has stood the test of time though slightly modified by agreement at three points, at each of which the decision

## AN ESCAPE

reached by us was dictated not by the merits of the case but by the binding instructions that we carried.

M. Minorsky and M. Belayew, his Deputy, were the first to cross the frontier into Persia; leaving Colonel Ryder and me to follow. I sent Colonel Ryder ahead with the precious *carte identique* and *cartes supplémentaires* and relative protocols, intending to follow him with the tents and animals and what little baggage we had. A few hours after he left the Turkish officials on the spot must have had news by telegraph that a declaration of war between Turkey and the Allies was hourly expected. They raised objections to my leaving; they wanted an extra copy of the protocol; it was necessary for them to have one for local use. I scanned the stern, hard faces and keen eyes not of those who spoke to me—their faces revealed nothing—but of the junior officers behind them. I saw, or thought I saw, clear indications that I should be forcibly prevented from leaving and held prisoner, if I insisted on going, as a prelude to internment.

I instantly not only agreed to stop but, saying I was in no hurry, invited the Turkish officials to lunch with me next day. I returned to my camp, only 400 yards away, and waited till about 6 p.m. Then, telling my servants, all local men, that they need not prepare food for me as I should dine with the Turks, I walked out into the darkness towards their camp. Once out of sight of my camp I turned at right angles into a ravine and made for the frontier between Persia and Turkey some 8 miles distant and thus to Maku, where I rejoined Colonel Ryder.

Nearly a year later I heard that the Turks, assuming I was still in my camp, came across at midday to find a sumptuous lunch awaiting them.

‘Where is your master?’ said their leader.

‘He slept in your camp, Sir.’

‘No, he did not.’

‘He dined with you.’

'No, he did not.'

'He left camp after dark saying he would be your guest.'

The Turkish Officer laughed—'He has cheated us—but not of our dinner,' and they sat down to enjoy themselves; after which they took charge of my tents and animals.

Colonel Ryder and I drove from Maku in a droshky and crossed the Oxus two hours before Turkey declared war on Russia on October 29th. A few hours later we left by train, but not before we had seen Russian troops pouring across the bridge into Persia on their way into Turkey across the very frontier we had been at such pains to delimit. It was the first breach of Persia's neutrality, and it was not the last.

We went by troop train to Tiflis where we were called out of our carriage to be tossed in blankets by a group of enthusiastic undergraduates who happened to be on the station on their way to join their units. Never, one of them assured us, had the Russian nation been so united in its determination to put a term to German ambitions; we were reminded by a senior officer of the very different attitude of the average Russian to the Russo-Japanese war of 1905, when the wives of reservists lay across the rails in a vain protest against the departure of the trains which bore their husbands to the front.

After some hours in Tiflis another troop train took us to Baku, where we obtained the latest news of the war from my friend the British Consul, Mr. Ranald McDonell. Thence via Moscow to St. Petersburg, whence we hoped to get home via Sweden. But the Counsellor of the British Embassy, Mr. O'Beirne,<sup>1</sup> advised us to go via Archangel which was not yet closed by ice, as the Russian railway line to the Swedish frontier was much congested.

The journey from Tiflis to Archangel took ten days, of which eight were spent in the railway train; every large

<sup>1</sup> He was drowned in H.M.S. *Hampshire* with Lord Kitchener.

## AT ARCHANGEL

station was crowded with troops. No time-tables were of any interest or value; everywhere was confusion, but no one seemed either confused or perturbed by the fact. We formed an unfavourable opinion of the value and capacity of the Russian war machine alike on the civil and military side.

We waited only a day at Archangel for a ship. The scene was as novel and surprising as anything I have witnessed. Our vessel and several others lay ice-bound in the fairway; sleds drawn by reindeer brought the cargo alongside over the ice, whence it was lifted by the ship's cranes. The sun rose at about 10.20 a.m. and set three hours later. The thermometer stood at about zero Fahrenheit. The cargo consisted almost entirely of Russian and Siberian eggs, and some timber. So soon as we had finished loading, a Canadian ice-breaker, the *Earl Grey*, came up, broke the ice round us, and forcing the great slabs up sent them sliding over the frozen surface of the river. We weighed anchor, turned with the aid of a tug in the open water, and went slowly down the Dwina preceded by the *Earl Grey* till we reached the mouth and relatively open water.

The tug was owned and controlled by the master; he had undertaken to turn us, and see us down the river and had been paid in advance but, when he came alongside, he refused to attach our hawser to his towing-post until a case of whisky had been tied to the end of it and lowered into his arms—blackmail of course, and typical of the country and the people.

After steaming thus for an hour or so the *Earl Grey's* hooter was sounded and our screw ceased to move. I went on deck to see half a dozen sleds, drawn by reindeer, crossing the river a mile ahead of us. The hooter was to hasten them in their passage—a contingency not provided for in the Maritime Rule of the Road.

We had hoped to reach the open sea by daylight, but

### ALLOWED TO PROCEED

the insistence of the tug master on his case of whisky had delayed us for two hours—and there were only four hours or so of daylight available, so we anchored for the night in the unlighted river. During the evening we were ordered by wireless to return to Archangel and unload our cargo, as the export of eggs had been forbidden. We obediently tried to return, but the tug master refused to help us to turn in the river without an extra case of whisky plus an exorbitant cash payment, claiming that his bargain was to take us down river, not up. We spent two whole days and nights anchored in that desolate reach while the river above us froze yet harder. The tug left us; the *Earl Grey* demanded a yet larger fee for breaking the ice between us and Archangel. At last, after exchanging a score of messages with the agents at Archangel and the various Ministries in St. Petersburg, we were allowed to proceed. We were the last ship to leave Archangel that winter, and went through thin pack ice in the White Sea, and rounded the North Cape on November 15th in extreme cold. The sun was visible only a few minutes before and after midday. A Moslem on board noted how pleasant a place Archangel would be in the month of *Ramadhan*, during which followers of the Prophet fast from dawn to dusk, and on the other hand assured me that some Moslem lascars had starved themselves to death recently, when *Ramadhan* fell during those months of the year when the sun never sets.

We saw an *aurora borealis* of exceptional magnificence. As a silent display of power and light it was almost terrifying.

‘It first took the form of a regular arc, with a sharp lower limit, underneath which the sky seemed very dark. The arc was made up of several parallel and pulsating layers. Then it gave birth to streamers like curtains hanging from the sky. After an hour during which these rays became brighter and more numerous it looked as if scores of rays were darting

## RUSSIANS PASS THROUGH ENGLAND

from the zenith. One felt that there should be a noise or at least a hum. Yet all was silent. It brightened the sky right down to the horizon. The colours were those of a sunrise or sunset in the Persian Gulf—bright green or red predominating but with purple and green and yellow. The changes were very rapid: both of colour and shape. At the climax the whole sky seemed ablaze, then, within half a minute, nothing was left but a few luminous tracks such as a rocket might leave. Then it bursts forth again, a maze of scintillating streamers, terribly silent.'

Then down the fjords in territorial waters as far as Bergen and across to Hull without incident by a zigzag and circuitous course in stormy seas.

I here heard a suggested origin for the rumoured passage of Russian troops through England for France. (My sister's charwoman herself saw them going through London one night carrying their top boots—and barefoot, so as not to arouse the sleeping city!) It was as follows:

Code telegrams from Archangel were not allowed. Messages came to Hull

4000 Russians (i.e. cases of Russian eggs)

6000 Siberians (i.e. cases of Siberian eggs)

despatched (date) in ss. (                      ).

Secrecy was enjoined on all concerned, but the news of the shipment spread—not of the explanation.

I reported at once to the Foreign Office, handed them our copy of the *Carte Identique* and of our protocols, and our accounts complete to date. Then to the India Office, who warned me for France to join my linked Regiment, much to my joy. I had just spent two days at home before embarkation, when I was told instead to go to Basrah to replace Sir Percy Cox's Assistant, my friend and colleague Capt. R. L. Birdwood, who had been shot by his side during one of the first skirmishes of the campaign. It was a sore disappointment to me, for I did not believe that the Mesopotamian campaign would involve

## BASRAH

much fighting and feared that if it did I should be doomed to an office stool. I could not, however, attempt to get the decision reversed. Cox had asked for me by name and his word was law. But I read with a sore heart the heavy casualties of November and December in the ranks of the 82nd and 84th Pioneers.

I left a few days later by the long sea route via Gibraltar and Malta, which I visited for the first time, and Bombay whence I travelled to Basrah on deck, having very willingly surrendered my cabin to a young officer who was clearly ill suited to exposure to the wintry winds of the Persian Gulf. I saw much of him later: he was decorated for gallantry and later killed in action.

Calling at Koweit before entering the Shatt al Arab, we grounded heavily on a mud bank. Anxious to avoid delay, I went off in a ship's boat with the mail officer, waded ashore, and walked 9 miles into Koweit to send telegrams and obtain lighters to take off the mail and if need be other cargo.

On December 28th the ship reached Basrah; less than an hour later I was deciphering telegrams and typing confidential letters for Sir Percy Cox as of old. A week or so later I received from Lady Cox for the first and only time a piece torn out of one of his letters to her which read: 'I am relieved of much donkey work now that A. T. W. is with me again. It is quite like old times and I am getting to bed earlier.' That was as good a confidential report as I could wish, and with it I may well conclude this chapter and, for the present, my reminiscences.

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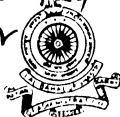
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